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DUNGEON

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DUNGEON®

DUNGEON

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What's Your Flavor?

Adventures fall into all sorts of categories. If you're like me, you enjoy dividing them into camps and comparing their strengths and weaknesses. (I'm one of those people who finds this joke hilarious: "There are 10 types of people in the world; those who understand binary numbering, and those who don't.") Some of the obvious splits are by:

Dungeon vs. Wilderness: This may be the oldest and most basic division. There are "dungeons" and there are "wilderness adventures." In that context, wilderness is a stand-in for anything that happens aboveground. At some point, old-fashioned dungeon crawls fell out of favor for being too artificial, but I think that misses the point. Their artificiality is part of what makes them interesting. A dungeon is a closed system with its own rules and conventions. That's what makes it unique.

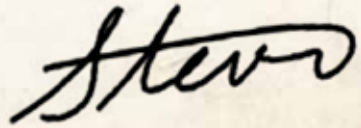
Location-based vs. Event-driven: Location-based adventures describe a location, its inhabitants, and their interactions, then turns the characters loose in it. The characters might have a specific goal in mind, or they might not. A big part of the enjoyment comes from just exploring the setting. An event-driven adventure almost always has the characters pursuing a goal, sometimes on a timetable, often at the behest of an NPC. Specific events are planned along the way, and there might—or might not—be a way to circumvent or forestall those events. Characters can influence the unfolding events through their actions, but the story Is going to proceed with or without their interaction.

Saving the World vs. Acting in Your Own Self Interest: This is one of the most interesting splits to me. Frequently, it follows the location-based vs. event-driven divide. That is, if the characters are out to save the world from an impending evil, there's a good chance that they're also in the midst of an event-driven adventure. If they're pursuing their own interest to get rich, become powerful, or just lead an exciting life filled with thrills and danger, there's a better chance that they're having more location-based adventures.

Beyond that, however, is a difference in inspirational sources. Players who favor the types of characters who are out to pursue their own interests in the campaign world tend to be fans of older, pulp-style, swords-and-sorcery fiction such as the tales of Conan the Barbarian, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, and the early books in Michael Moorcock's Stormbringer saga (*Elric of Melnibone*, *Sailor on the Seas of Fate*). Players who enjoy the saving the world probably prefer stories such as the later Elric tales (*The Bane of the Black Sword*, *Stormbringer*), the Dragonlance Chronicles, the Earthsea stories, and Lord of the Rings. Personally, while I like all of those books, I gravitate toward characters who are freebooters, wanderers, and rootless sell-swords who'll sign on as a caravan guard just to see what's on the other side of the desert over those who get involved in long-running crusades to make the world a better or safer place, although saving civilization now and then makes for a very enjoyable diversion.

In *Dungeon*, we recognize both camps (and the overlap between them) and try to offer variety. In the Chaos Scar, for example, you'll find adventures where the characters are clearly looking out for the good of the surrounding countryside and others where they're in it mainly for the gold and the glory. This month, "Lord of the White Field" finds the characters chiefly on a mission of mercy, while "Head in the Clouds" falls a bit into both camps: an NPC asks the characters for help, but their reasons for helping probably have more to do with curiosity and a thirst for the unusual than with altruism.

We're interested in hearing your preferences, too. Send your views to dndinsider@wizards.com. We like getting mail.



Lord of the White Field

By Daniel Marthaler

illustrations by Lucias Graciano and Wayne England

cartography by Jared Blando

And I beheld a broken landscape of blasted rock and cracked arid soil. Rotting grave markers, ancient tombstones, and crumbling mausoleums burst forth from the lifeless earth for as far as the eye could see like macabre parodies of worldly plants. The only structures visible were built not of stone, brick, or wood, but of countless bones woven and fused together, supported by other, altogether more monstrous bones that served the purpose of beams and arches in mortal construction. In this terrible place only the unquiet dead moved, cursed to an eternity of unspeakable hunger for the flesh of their fellows that can never be sated. Over it all, like a cover drawn over the horror below, rose a billowing cloud of pulverized bone that blotted out the burning sun and rained down on those below like some ghastly snow. This, then, is the realm known as the White Kingdom, fiefdom of Doresain, the Ghoul King, who is exarch to Orcus.

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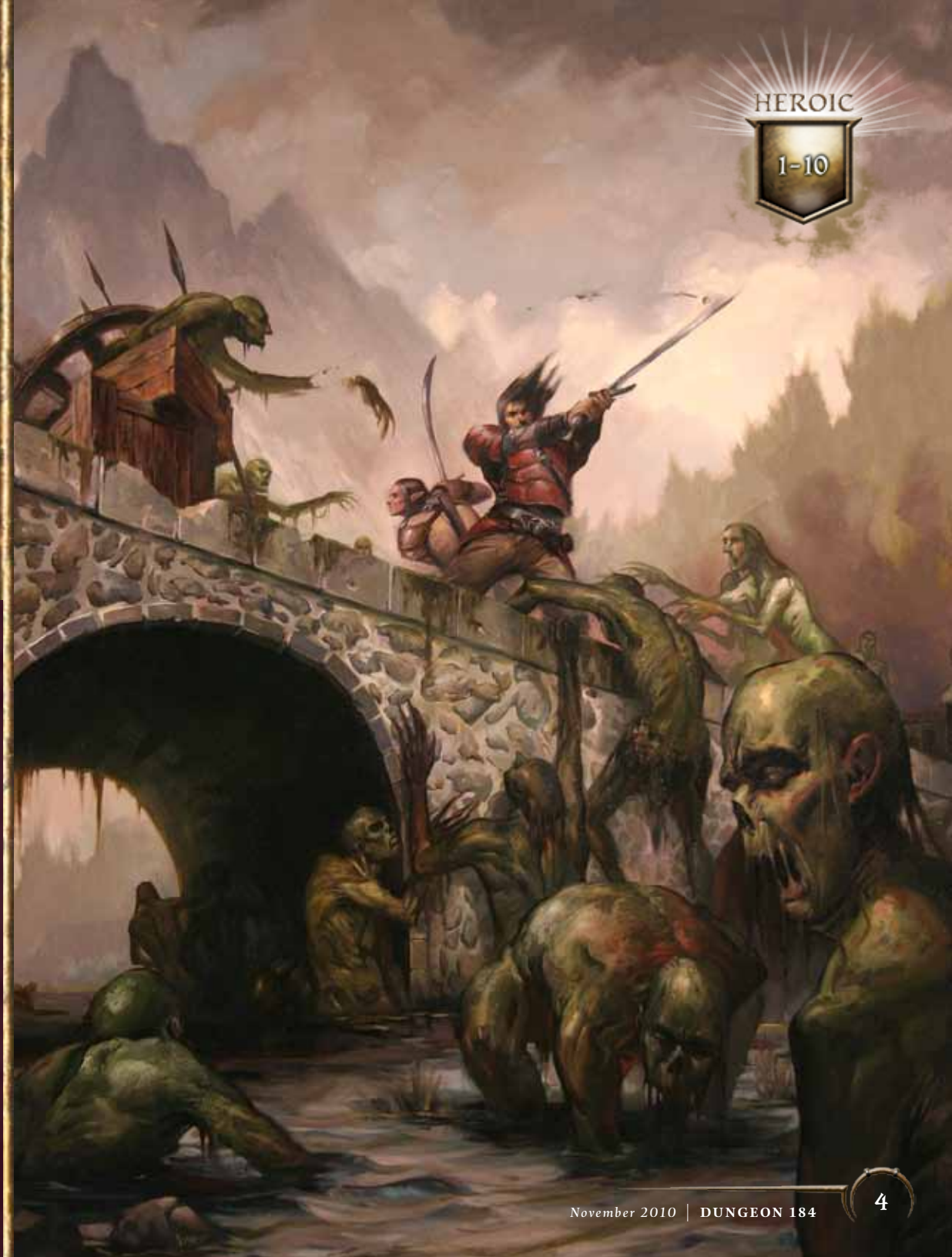


"Lord of the White Field" is an adventure for characters of levels 6-8. By the end of the adventure, five characters should have earned enough experience to gain a level. Characters of 8th level might come up a bit short; you can supplement encounters with a few more monsters or include one or two additional encounters to account for the difference.

In "Lord of the White Field," the characters navigate the ghoul-haunted ruins of Hampstead while seeking answers to its sudden destruction and a means to prevent the terror from spreading. The harrowing journey tests their mental and spiritual endurance as much as their physical prowess as they traverse a landscape filled with the ravenous dead.

BACKGROUND

Three weeks ago, a young farmer named Darien uncovered a jagged shard of bone while working his fields just outside the city of Hampstead. He pocketed it as an idle curiosity, since the shard seemed to glimmer as if polished, despite the number of cuts and notches that it bore.

An idle curiosity it was not, tragically. The shard was a bit of planar detritus, fallen through the weave of reality to come to rest in the fields near Hampstead. It originated in the stygian depths of the Abyss, in the domain known as the White Kingdom, which is situated within the hellish realm of Thanatos. There the shard had once been part of an unfortunate victim or foolish crusader who met a terrible end at the hands of Doresain, the Ghoul King, Lord of the White Kingdom, and exarch of the demon lord Orcus. After a perfunctory feasting, gnawing, and cracking, Doresain discarded the shattered, leftover remains in short order, but even this passing contact was sufficient to imbue them with a spark of the warping power of the Abyss and an echo, however pale, of the Ghoul King's immortal hunger.

Soon after finding the shard, Darien was plagued with vivid, gruesome nightmares of flashing teeth, bloody flesh, and an unspeakable hunger as ravenous as it was ageless. The unrelenting visions drove him to seek help as they besieged even his waking mind with terrible images and horrific urges, but he found no respite. After weeks of sanity-sapping mental and spiritual strain, the vile influence proved the stronger, sweeping away all that Darien was in a single, terrifying night of brutal slaughter and depraved feasting as the beast that had been Darien fell upon Hampstead. Twisted by the power of the shard, those he slew shuddered into cursed unlife and hurled themselves at those who had once been their friends and families in a frantic attempt to sate an eternal hunger. In that single night, nearly the entire population was turned or ripped to bloody, screaming shreds, leaving only a handful of desperate survivors to be dragged, thrashing, from their bolt holes in the ensuing days. Soon, only the wailing howls of the risen ghouls sounded over Hampstead.

Adventure Synopsis

A coalition of prosperous merchants and city officials, and a few concerned citizens, from Hampstead's sister town of Brunswick implores the characters to determine the reason they have lost contact with Hampstead, investigate the verity of the fearful claims trickling in, and, if at all possible, deal with whatever the problem might be before it grows worse. While traveling, the characters stumble upon a ravaged campsite and are subsequently ambushed by ghouls as they investigate, hinting at what lies ahead.

With the ghouls dispatched, the characters are free to continue toward their goal. While crossing the large, open band of fields that encircles Hampstead, they come across a large farmhouse that appears to have had its windows boarded over and that is locked from the inside. The huddled survivors within usher the party in, but their passage has already alerted the hungry undead that prowl the chest-high crops in the fields. The party must then fend off the swarm as it crashes against the hastily fortified building, desperate to get at those within it. Beating off the first wave buys the characters time to learn what they can from the survivors, but the ghouls return in greater numbers, forcing the characters to choose between escorting the hapless civilians to safety through the ghoul-haunted grasses, acting as bait to draw the stalking undead away and leave a clear path to freedom, or leaving the family to its fate as appetizers. Regardless of their decision, they must carve their way through fields crawling with hidden ghouls to reach Hampstead.

The true horror reveals itself as they reach Hampstead: hundreds of ravenous ghouls, once the peaceful inhabitants, roam the streets, forcing the characters to maneuver cautiously or risk alerting an insurmountable horde of hungry foes. They must contend with the spiritual and mental strain of the threat of discovery and the nerve-fraying, incessant howling of the ghouls as they navigate the city in search of answers.

Eventually their investigations lead them to Darien's farmhouse and, if they can endure and unravel the emotional backlash of a place that witnessed soul shattering despair and evil, the unwholesome revelations contained within it. The characters flee the cursed place, but the beast that once was Darien has been alerted by their meddling

and hunts them through ghoul-haunted ruins overflowing with its servants. Run to ground, the characters must face the heart of the darkness, pitting themselves against eternal hunger and unholy power to halt the spread of corruption.

QUESTS

In "Lord of the White Field" the characters investigate the ghoul-infested ruins of Hampstead. As the adventure progresses, the characters have the following chances to earn quest XP.

Minor Quest—Rescue the Survivors

These poor innocents have endured much. At least three of the survivors from the farmhouse must reach safety for the characters to earn their reward.

Reward: 300 XP.

Minor Quest—Reconsecrate St. Lucian's

After the chapel was fouled by the terrible events within it, the characters find that they must reconsecrate the chapel themselves if they wish for it to once more be hallowed ground.

Reward: 300 XP.

Minor Quest—Recover the Ring

The elderly Mr. Harwick was in Brunswick when contact was lost and is desperate for any news or sign of his wife. Returning her wedding band or bringing him news at least offers closure.

Reward: 300 XP.

Major Quest—Halt the Corruption

The characters must uncover what happened in Hampstead and destroy the beast Darien has become or risk the countryside falling prey to ravenous undead.

Reward: 1,500 XP.

TREASURE

Characters should receive the following ten treasure parcels by the end of the adventure. The most likely encounters to include treasure are indicated below, but you can distribute the parcels however you like.

Parcel A: _____, R1: Outriders
Parcel B: _____, H2: Tiren's Stand
Parcel C: _____, H2: Tiren's Stand
Parcel D: _____, H3: Clearing the Grounds
Parcel E: _____, H3: Clearing the Grounds
Parcel F: _____, H5: Love's Loss
Parcel G: _____, H6: Visions of Hell
Parcel H: _____, H7: The Lord of the White Field
Parcel I: _____, H7: The Lord of the White Field
Parcel J: _____, H7: The Lord of the White Field

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in spaces above. Magic items should be selected from your players' wish lists.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 11
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 10
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 9
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 8
Parcel 5: Platinum and gold ring set with an alexandrite stone (1,500 gp)
Parcel 6: Bronze devotional statuette of St. Lucian (250 gp), worked gold torc (250 gp), 800 gp
Parcel 7: Matched set of three elegant longswords with gold filigree (250 gp each), two *potions of healing*
Parcel 8: Pouch of eight red garnets (100 gp each) and 50 gp
Parcel 9: Delicate silver necklace set with blue moonstones (250 gp), 150 gp
Parcel 10: Gold-flecked white and black marble chess set (250 gp), one *potion of healing*

Preparing for Adventure

"Lord of the White Field" sees the characters explore the ghoul-overrun town of Hampstead. They must rely on their mental stamina as much as their physical prowess as they move undetected among a horde of undead more than capable of overwhelming them. The characters mustn't let the constant threat of a messy death or the incessant howling screeches of the undead wear on their nerves if they are to keep the fate of Hampstead from repeating itself in other locations.

The adventure can begin as soon as the characters are ready, but there will be precious little rest and no opportunities for commerce, so such considerations are best taken care of before leaving. Go to "Reestablishing Communication" when you are ready to begin.

REESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION

Once the characters have recuperated from their latest adventure, they are approached by a well-dressed man who introduces himself as Nathaniel Fuller, Councilman of Brunswick:

"Your exploits in the area have earned you a fair bit of fame and a reputation I hope you will live up to. I am here representing a number of upstanding citizens of Brunswick who share a great concern for our sister city of Hampstead. For several days now we have had no travelers, nor even the most punctual of merchants, entering our fair city from the east. As of last night, the messenger the council dispatched was nearly a full day overdue—something unheard of for the man. We fear the worst, but it will take time to organize a response officially—time we fear might only worsen the situation. So we implore you, who have proven so capable in the past, to investigate whatever has befallen Hampstead with all haste."

If the characters have questions, Nathaniel does his best to answer them, but quickly reiterates that he has little information about what has closed the roads. Ragged woodsfolk and some ne'er-do-wells have a few tales, no doubt exaggerated by drink, of demons howling in the night and people being dragged into the woods by ghosts. However, they had moved on before anyone gave credence to their unlikely stories. If the characters ask for a description of the messenger, Nathaniel reveals that he was not closely acquainted with Bernwald, but assures the characters that nothing short of foul play would stop the man, who can be recognized by his dark complexion and message bag bearing the Brunswick seal, from completing his mission.

Should the characters press for monetary compensation, Nathaniel obviously loses a measure of respect for the "heroes," but agrees to clear a 400 gold piece fee with the council to be available upon the party's successful return. If this is the case, be sure not to award parcel 9 during the adventure.

Shortly after Nathaniel takes his leave, an elderly man makes his way up to the party. Obviously distraught, the man gives his name as Harwick, offers a trembling hand, and stutters out the following, wringing his hands all the while.

"Mr. Fuller was asking you to check in on Hampstead, wasn't he? They've closed the road and won't let anyone try the way, even those of us who live there! I was in Brunswick when I heard that something had happened, but by then it was too late and they wouldn't let me return. My wife—she's still in Hampstead and I can't get to her or even get news of what happened!

Beth is all I have left . . . she means everything to me. Please, I beg you to see how she is doing. It wouldn't even be out of your way. We live right near the bridges and Beth always keeps a pot of fresh wildflowers on the window . . . those stupid flowers. . . ."

At this point Mr. Harwick breaks down but recovers after a few quiet sobs. It is obvious that his distress is going to make getting much information out of him tricky, but characters that agree to check up on the old man's wife can garner enough information to find his home without difficulty and can learn anything from the following paragraph they did not know. He is only a moderately successful trader, but in his desperation, he agrees to hand over everything he has (remove one parcel from Encounter H5; Harwick hands it over now) to particularly heartless characters. It is up to the DM to decide if such pitiless actions are worthy of the quest XP.

Characters that have spent meaningful amounts of time in the area, or ask around, know that Hampstead is a moderately sized town of about 6,000 souls. The town is split into two sections by the river Lebe, and two sturdy bridges that are the best crossing point for miles connect the sections. Like most towns, a band of farmland cleared from the surrounding wilderness surrounds it. Its most famous landmark is doubtlessly the Chapel of St. Lucian. Lucian was a regional hero who lived and died holding back the darkness from ravaging the area. Legend holds that his remains are housed within the chapel, making it a popular pilgrimage spot for locals. Besides Brellac Monsen, the ranking priest of St. Lucian's, the town's most prominent citizens are the Lord-Mayor Roland Arcat and Christoph Tiren, local wizard and arcane researcher.

PART ONE: THE ROAD EAST

When the characters depart for Hampstead, they find the road abandoned. Whatever has befallen Hampstead, or at least the rumors of horror, has kept people from traveling frequently. However, if the characters have not reached 7th level, the road could be plagued with opportunistic bandits, crazed woodcutters, or whatever other dangers you see fit to add to get them caught up.

SETTING THE TONE

Atmosphere is as important in this adventure as the various tactical encounters. When describing what happens in this adventure, whether it is the streets the characters move down or the hulking beast they face at the climax, try to imbue the scene with suitable amounts of creepiness, horror, and suspense. Suspenseful horror movies, especially zombie apocalypse films, are the perfect patterns to draw on when laying things out for your players. Describe narrow streets where the wind whistles through broken panes of glass and causes a loose shutter to clap against an empty frame. Add to this the endless howling of hungry ghouls where appropriate. These elements can make for much more memorable sessions—even more so if you add little touches of humanity amid the desolation and destruction.

Maneuvering through the undead haunted city is a major part of the adventure and deserves some attention to these sorts of details. Instead of saying that someone failed a skill check, describe how a loose bit of glass crunches underfoot and causes a ghoul digging in a collapsed building a block away to snap its head up and sniff hungrily. Healing surges aren't just lost. Instead a slavering ghoul smashes through a window and bites savagely at the character's face before being hacked down, but not before it tears bleeding gashes in his or her flesh that attracts every blood-sniffing ghoul within blocks.

The ghouls the characters encounter can be all the more terrifying if their lost humanity is played up to contrast with their new twisted, bestial existence. To help increase this visceral impact, describe ghouls wearing damaged but recognizable clothing, such as a single unlaced shoe or a sky blue apron stained dark with dried blood, or other mundane attributes that point out that they were innocent civilians, like any the characters might have interacted with, not so long ago. A child-sized ghoul wrapped in the shredded remains of a pink dress and clutching a doll with its limbs chewed off in a clawed hand is much more horrifying than just another "ghoul minion".

To help carry this sense of creeping dread and threat of being eaten messily into the tactical encounters, you'll find that the ghouls share a few common behaviors throughout the adventure. The first is that they are not driven by a grand scheme, loyalty, or even rational thought; they are driven by an insatiable hunger for sentient flesh. To this end they focus their attacks deliberately and obviously (the characters should notice or be made aware of this pretty quickly) upon wounded or otherwise weaker characters. Once you have determined who the weakest character is, the ghouls throw themselves at that character, snapping off bleeding gobbets of flesh as they try to down the easy meal.

Grabbed, stunned, unconscious, otherwise helpless, or even dead characters are not ignored as is so often the case, but are targeted with renewed vigor and/or dragged away to a nice quiet spot for a snack. Characters that are dragged off the map and not recovered within moments meet a grisly end in the stomach of a starving ghoul. Without a body, which will quickly be consumed entirely, reviving such a character is all but impossible. Consider allowing the remaining characters to engage in a skill challenge to recover a fallen comrade's body or have the deceased character show up in a later encounter as a ghoul if you feel the need to mitigate this somewhat, but the threat of permanent death must feel real if the players are to experience the requisite fear.

The second aspect most of the tactical encounters share is that the commotion generated by the conflict, not to mention the excited calls of the ghouls involved, quickly attracts the attention of more undead eager to join in the feasting. What these reinforcements consist of and how they appear is dealt with in each encounter, but the characters need to be aware that they will surely be drowned in a sea of undead flesh eaters if they stay in the open for long. Not every foe can be defeated with a strong arm and a wizard's magic, at least not all at the same time.

The road, regardless of any additions, remains the only clear path through the thick forest of the surrounding area. The passage of many travelers has packed its dirt surface hard while the ruts carved by heavy wagons attest to the trade that normally flows along it.

The Savaged Camp

Ahead, a small clearing opens adjacent to the road, and in it is a makeshift campsite. A single, still figure is crumpled in an ominously dark puddle.

When the characters approach, it becomes obvious that a struggle raged in the small clearing, collapsing the tent and churning the ground to mud. The downed man is wearing stained traveling clothing typical of a poor trader or other wanderer and suffered a series of deep claw marks along with a chunk torn from his back. A DC 16 Heal check determines that the bite taken from his back was the likely cause of death and that he has been dead for less than an hour. A successful DC 11 Perception check determines that the camp was most likely set up for more than a single person, and a successful DC 16 Nature check reveals that the humanoid attackers, who seemed not to be wearing shoes, attacked without warning and appear to have dragged at least two people into the deeper forest. Characters searching through the trader's things find a few cheap trinkets and supplies, but nothing of value. Once the characters have had a chance to make a few checks or search the camp, the ghouls return.

See **Tactical Encounter R1:** Outriders

The Fields of Hampstead

After the events at the campsite, the journey continues uninterrupted along the empty, quiet road. Eventually the enclosing forest opens dramatically onto the lush fields that surround Hampstead. Chest-high crops and grasses sweep outward, bounding the paths and roads that crisscross their breadth as effectively as any fence, and a wispy haze blankets the area regardless of the hour.

A light dusting of white powder like the lightest of snow falls upon the path and the stalks of the nearby plants, and it also accrues on the characters as they progress or rub against covered objects. Characters interested in identifying the strange powder can attempt a DC 23 Heal or Nature check to determine that it is finely powdered bone and that the fog, which has been thickening from errant wisps to a pervading cover and clinging to every exposed surface, appears to be the same powdered bone. If that check is successful, characters can attempt a DC 23 Religion check to recall that the abyssal domain of Doresain, Exarch of Orcus and King of Ghouls, is known as the White Kingdom because of the bones that comprise every building and the fog of bone dust that covers all.

Fortified Farmhouse

As the characters make their way across the fields, they come upon a large and sturdy farmhouse that appears to have had its windows boarded over recently and hastily. Investigation reveals that the door, and all other obvious methods of egress, has been similarly fortified from inside. A door or window can be forced open with a DC 20 Strength check, sending the character crashing through the planks. Alternatively, attempts at communication, either by hailing the house or knocking on the door in a more civilized manner, or discourse between the characters carried on above a whisper attracts the attention of the occupants.

With a screech of protesting wood and steel, the door opens partially and a strained voice sounds from within the building: *"What are you doing? Stop that noise and get in here before you attract them all!"* Inside, the characters find a small family of survivors holed up in their home. Two young girls and a woman who appears to be their mother are huddled under a blanket against one wall while an elderly man gripping a rusting sword peers intently into the fields through cracks in the boarded-up windows. The voice that ordered them in belongs to a middle-aged man holding the door partially open with one hand and motioning the characters in with the timber axe he holds in the other.

Once the last character enters, he hurriedly shuts the door before turning to the party and demanding to know what they were doing out there and how they made it this far. If the characters explain their mission, the man relaxes somewhat and introduces his wife Allisa, his daughters Gwen and Salla, and father Ollan, before introducing himself as Byron Westfeld. Before the conversation can get much beyond the introductions, a sudden, wailing howl shatters the calm. *"Gods,"* Byron curses, *"they followed you!"*

See **Tactical Encounter R2:** House Crashing

Survivors

With the ghouls driven off, the characters are free to introduce themselves and speak with each other without immediate danger of being eaten. Byron does most of the talking, while his wife and father attempt to keep the children as calm and quiet as possible.

He is somewhat upset with the characters for revealing their location to the ghouls, but he realizes that they would have found them out sooner or later and is grateful that the characters were present when it happened. He answers any questions to the best of his ability, but his information on what happened is sketchy. The following are a few likely questions and his responses.

What happened in Hampstead?

Couldn't tell you why or how, but I can tell you that those damned things outside came pouring out of town almost a week ago. Knew something bad was up when we could hear the screaming start from here. Saw a few fires start, too, 'fore I boarded the windows over. Thought it was bandits or maybe a raid at the time. Wish I'd been right.

What are these things?

Don't know, but I'm pretty sure they used to be people. Saw one that looked like Will Tracem. Of course, the last time I saw Will, he didn't try and eat me.

How many of those things are there?

From the howling they get up to from time to time, I'd say lots. Hundreds? Thousands? Maybe more. I'm not heading in to find out.

Are there any other survivors?

There were. You could hear the things get real excited when they found someone, then you heard the screams. If anybody's left in there, they're keeping their heads down.

We're looking for answers; where should we start?

You could try the town worthies, assuming they aren't eaten. Tiren's place is stocked with books, and he's a wizard to boot. St. Lucian's is a sturdy place, holy too, if the priests are right. They might be holding out still. The Lord-Mayor'll be with the guard, assuming there're any left and they didn't make a break for it.

What are you going to do now?

We can't stay here, that's for sure. They know we're here, and they'll be back with friends. They're out there, in the fields, waiting, but we've got no other choice now.

Byron can give them directions to the wizard's home and the Chapel of St. Lucian if the characters ask. If the characters don't bring the subject of what the family is going to do now, Byron does. He explains that they can't stay here any longer now that the things know their hiding spot. He doesn't fancy their chances of surviving a dash through the monster-infested fields, but he tries to put a brave face on for his family. If the characters seem unwilling to escort them to safety or draw the things off, an idea he poses if it doesn't occur to anyone, he points out that they were doing fine until the characters arrived. If his recriminations, and the heart-rending, terrified cries of his little girls, fail to thaw the frozen hearts of the characters and they leave the family to become appetizers, they forfeit any chance at the Quest XP.

See **Tactical Encounter R3:** Crossing the White Fields

PART TWO: HAMPSTEAD

Once they make it across the fields, the characters arrive in a twisted and disturbing parody of a bustling town. Quaint farmhouses in the local style nestle next to workshops, large warehouses, compact city dwellings, and a host of other buildings found in any settlement. The windows, though, are empty, filled only with uneven fangs of shattered glass. Doors, their surfaces gouged and raked, hang limply from broken hinges or lie splintered in the doorways they once occupied. Dried blood stains walls and, in some locations, small pools of blood contain bits of viscera from various creatures. Scattered bones, a shattered femur here or a crushed skull there, peek from the rubble and the thick coat of white dust that has accumulated over everything.

Above it all, the howl of countless ghouls sounds unendingly as the city's only inhabitants skulk and scrabble through the wreckage, desperately searching for a sign of live, or scrap of dead, flesh. Lone ghouls slink through the shadows, avoiding the attentions of the feral packs that scour the ruins, and preying on their isolated or weakened brethren as readily as fresher meat.

Navigating Hampstead

The hordes of ghouls lurking throughout the city make any attempt at movement fraught with danger. Every dislodged rock, clink of armor, and step into the open risks attracting a flood of ravenous undead, forcing any who would advance to tread carefully indeed.

See **Skill Challenge H1:** Ghoul Country

Seeing the Wizard

The home and office of Christoph Tiren, the local wizard and arcane researcher, is the nearest of the locations where the characters hope to find answers and a means to combat what has befallen Hampstead. The two-story building is not difficult to find with the directions the characters have been given, besides the obvious challenges inherent to moving about in a city overrun with flesh-eating undead. As with most structures in the town, it suffered under the

attentions of the ghouls, which smashed windows and caved in doors. Inside, the office and living quarters of the first floor have been all but destroyed, with almost nothing salvageable. The second floor is a large, open ritual space and work area bordered with a small library's worth of arcane and historical texts. At least, it was. Much of the room's furnishings have been mangled, or at least bowled over, and shreds of parchment flutter everywhere. Blasted sections of the room appear to have been burned by an intense fire, scoured by acid, or shattered by explosive impacts. These, along with the scattered pools of necrotic blood and odd piece of ghoul embedded in the wall, make it clear that whatever happened, Tiren did not go down easily.

Characters investigating the room can glean the following information by succeeding on the given check:

Arcana (DC 16): The various blasted areas were caused by a number of arcane attack spells.

Heal (DC 16): Most of the blood has been spilt by the undead, but a living creature left one stain. The size of the pool indicates that the wounds suffered would have been fatal.

Dungeoneering (DC 16): By the pattern of the burns, it seems the ghouls came swarming both up the stairs and through the windows. The time frame most likely matches that given to you by Byron Westfeld; it seems Tiren fell during the initial attack.

During the investigation, the characters turn up little that was not damaged or destroyed in the fighting. They do, however, discover an intricately detailed golden sphere on the floor near what remains of the desk. Upon inspection, it appears to be a magic mechanism for recording notes spoken aloud to it and repeating them back at a later time, no doubt useful for a researcher.

The sphere is still functional, but its controls were temporarily scrambled when it was struck during the combat. Once a character has determined its purpose, or pocketed it if he or she plans on checking it later, it activates errantly and a thunderously loud, but calm and measured, voice blasts from the sphere, noting the results of his latest research into a particularly elusive augury ritual in painful detail. A DC 16 Arcana or Insight check regains control of the device and stops the replay, as does a quick rap for more direct characters, but the damage has been done.

See **Tactical Encounter H2:** Tiren's Stand

The Trail to St. Lucian's

Once the characters fight their way free of the wizard's building, they are free to play through the notes stored on the sphere at a safe, and controlled, volume. The majority of the recordings deal with mundane research into the history of the region or Tiren's attempts to work out particularly difficult rituals. The latest entries were fragmented by the damage the sphere sustained, but the following few snippets are clear enough:

. . . Father Monsen brought a case to me today. It seems a young man named Dorien, Darien, or something like that, has been suffering from terrible nightmares that Monsen believes might be prophetic. I don't know why he reached that conclusion, but the boy will be stopping by tomorrow, so I suppose I'll have a cha . . .

. . . clearly these nightmares are growing in both their intensity and horror . . . screaming meat . . . and of blood . . . don't blame the boy for falling apart. . . .

Tiren's Sphere **Level 10 Uncommon**

This golden sphere can bind much more than simple words.

Wondrous Item 5,000 gp

Property: *Tiren's sphere* can record 20 hours of mundane speech within itself and repeat it back perfectly. A series of arcane controls allow the bearer to determine what is replayed.

My auguries detected some form of extraplanar emanations. By the colors, I'd have to say it's from the Chaos, most likely the Abyss with that oily edging. Gods I hope Monsen is wrong about these nightma . . .

Past this point, the notes are scrambled beyond comprehension or recovery. The Chapel of St. Lucian is most likely the characters' next stop. Locating its position is relatively easy with the directions they were given. Scaling a building allows forgetful characters to clearly see its distinctive spire, but crossing the wasteland of ghoul haunted ruins won't be easy.

See **Skill Challenge H1:** Ghoul Country

St. Lucian's Chapel

The characters find the chapel grounds occupied by a handful of lurking ghouls scrabbling about in the courtyard. Occasionally one lets loose a wailing howl to join the chorus of the restless dead or growls menacingly at one of its fellows. The doors to the chapel held despite the onslaught of the ravenous ghouls that even now sniff hungrily about them.

See **Tactical Encounter H3:** Clearing the Grounds

The Horror Within

Inside the chapel, the characters are greeted with a scene from a nightmare. Whatever townsfolk sought shelter here met a gruesome end. Eviscerated bodies lie opened upon the floor and pews, their innards draped over their disarticulated forms. Crudely flayed skins and strings of flesh hang from the walls and ceiling. The savaged remnants of what appears to have once been an altar boy have been splayed across the chapel's alter. All bear signs of having been partially eaten.

Characters investigating the defiled chapel can attempt the following checks to learn what they can from the gruesome site:

Heal (DC 16): The bite marks appear to be humanoid in origin. It appears, based on the wound patterns, that the victims did not or could not defend themselves and, most disturbingly, that they were alive when the feeding began. The bodies are no more than a few days old, placing their deaths well after the initial ghoul attack.

Perception (DC 23): No sign indicates forced entry, despite the slaughter. Whatever happened, the place is secure now.

Religion (DC 23): The atrocities committed here were terrible enough to have desecrated the chapel, rendering the once hallowed ground a tainted charnel house.

Thievery (DC 16): All the doors remained locked and secured, along with every other access point. There's no indication of how the ghouls gained entry.

This carnage was inflicted by Brellac Monson, the head priest, when he snapped under the strain of the ghouls' siege and was overcome by Doresain's influence.

In addition to whatever they learn above, the characters collect a number of bloodstained parchment sheets. Among the tithe tallies, funeral ledgers, and candle orders are a few scraps that appear to be from the personal notes of Brellac Monsen, the ranking priest. They focus on a farmer named Darien being afflicted by terrible nightmares of bone and blood, flashing teeth and ripping flesh, as well as Monsen's feeling of helplessness as to how to help. As they grew worse, Monsen began to fear that an external cause created the increasingly prophetic and apocalyptic visions and dispatched a novice named Allworth to keep watch over the poor man and to assist Darien's younger sister, Elisa, in caring for him. The notes also contain directions to Darien's home, which lies across the river in the eastern portion of Hampstead.

A single, hurried entry bears the only record of what happened during the ghoul attack and its aftermath:

Only a handful of us made it into the chapel. The damned undead were waiting when we tried to make it back with what survivors we could find. Brother Mallard remained behind to hold them off while we sealed the chapel doors. Screaming . . . he screamed as they ate him. They came over the river. I can hear their shrieks through the walls. They came so fast. I fear none of us can survive this. What sort of gods could allow this?

Characters who are so inclined can inter what remains of the victims within the chapel in the small catacombs that lie underneath it with an hour's gruesome toil on the party's part. If this is done, the defiled chapel can be consecrated by the characters, which ensures the rest of the deceased but does not actively inhibit the undead. The commotion involved imposes a –2 penalty to the first skill check each character makes in the next Ghoul Country skill challenge. Regardless, the chapel remains one of the few secure structures in the city and offers a chance for the characters to take an extended rest.

To the River

With the only leads pointing to the eastern section of Hampstead, the characters need to cross the river to continue their search. Crossing the stretch of undead hunted ruins between here and there will have to come first, though.

See **Skill Challenge H1:** Ghoul Country

Crossing the Lebe

Two bridges cross the river Lebe, which cuts through the center of Hampstead. The bridges are constructed of hewn stone with timber starlings protecting the two stone supports. Buildings cluster close to the banks, but the bridges, and of course the river, are dangerously exposed. Debris is scattered across the surface of the bridges, evidence of a hastily mounted defense. It failed.

See **Tactical Encounter H4:** The River Lebe

The Harwicks'

Mr. Harwick's home lies but a few blocks from the bridges. Characters can find the house without much trouble, aided by the old man's directions and a telltale, shattered pot of faded wildflowers. A small pack of ghouls scratches about in the nearby ruins, but the path to the house itself is clear. The door against which the flowers once stood has been smashed in, and the quaint, homey interior of the house ravaged. Characters investigating the house uncover a cellar trap door hidden under the debris. It is wedged from below, but a DC 16 Strength or DC 23 Thievery check

pries it open to reveal a ladder descending into the dark. Once the first character descends into the cellar or sticks a head in to look, the encounter begins.

See **Tactical Encounter H5:** Love's Loss

To the Farmer's

Whether the characters make for Darien's after stopping by the Harwicks' or head over straight from the bridge, the area is overflowing with wandering ghouls too numerous to confront directly. Stealth and wits serve the characters well while navigating the ruined cityscape.

See **Skill Challenge H1:** Ghoul Country

Darien's Farmhouse

This large but somewhat rundown house would have been showing its age before the town was ravaged by ghouls. Now the door swings open on damaged hinges to reveal an interior that has been all but demolished, with furnishings smashed or scattered. Parchment is strewn everywhere, shredded scraps and torn sheets all covered in handwriting that ranges from normal printing to a violent scrawl. The writing extends to every available surface, gouged into wood and scribbled in dried blood.

The writing speaks of the terrible visions tormenting Darien, visions of screaming meat, hot, pulsing blood, rending teeth, and an eternal, unspeakable hunger. A lingering feeling of dread and discomfort fills the place. As the characters begin searching the house or sifting through the maddened writing in earnest, the tactical encounter begins.

See **Tactical Encounter H6:** Visions of Hell

The Ghoul King Cometh

In addition to the information they uncovered, the characters are aware that the thing that Darien became has felt their interference and will be coming. The characters can stand and fight if they choose, but the unsettling aura of emotional trauma remains strong near Darien's former home and will only serve to strengthen the beast, something they are conscious of. Characters who decide to run, either to get away from the house or to meet the ghoul lord on a battlefield of their choosing, must engage in the Ghoul Country skill challenge again as they flee through the city. Their haste imposes a –2 penalty to all checks made during the challenge and the malign influence of the Ghoul Lord doubles the penalties to checks accrued during the challenge as his will bends the usually erratic ghouls to his designs. When they face the beast, whether they stood their ground at the farmhouse, turned to face their pursuers, or failed the skill challenge (note that the usual encounter does not occur), the encounter begins.

See **Tactical Encounter H7:** The Lord of the White Field

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The destruction of the beast that Darien had become causes the ghouls, bereft of the will that bound them, to revert to their baser nature. Countless ghouls fall upon each other in an orgy of self-destruction, while many others slink off into the wilderness alone or in small packs. Although the remaining ghouls are not all destroyed and minor pockets can survive for some time in isolated areas or hidden away within dungeons, their threat to the overall security of the region is ended.

When the characters return to Brunswick, Nathaniel Fuller once more meets with them on behalf of the town. He is aghast at the carnage and destruction they describe and plainly impressed that the characters survived the ordeal. He honors his word and presents the characters with any reward promised, lauding them publicly as heroes if they undertook the mission without requiring payment.

Harwick also seeks them out once he learns the characters have returned. When informed of the fate of his wife, however the characters present it, he sags visibly, like a marionette with half its strings cut. If the characters return his wife's ring, he clutches it to his chest as if it could somehow ward off the crushing truth. He sincerely, but brokenly, thanks the characters for their kindness before slowly stumbling off as tears cloud his eyes. The characters can do little to lessen his pain—only time will have that chance.

The fate of Hampstead is left open-ended. Will any effort be mounted to reclaim the city from the squatting ghouls or other monsters that might take up residence or will it be abandoned as cursed and left to tumble into ruin and become the haunt of evil beasts? Any attempts to clear the site would stand a greater chance of success if the characters joined as champions, leaders, or even sponsors, but its fate is left to you.

This adventure assumes that the shard of tainted bone, the bit of planar detritus that started this whole unfortunate affair, is destroyed along with Darien, but it does not have to be. It could easily be the source of further adventures as the characters seek out a way to safely destroy it or at least contain its evil. Who knows what they might have to undertake or what vile creatures the shard might call out to in its defense?

About the Author

Daniel Marthaler is an avid gamer with soaring delusions of grandeur and dreams of breaking into the industry. Despite being 6' 3", he has a peculiar love of the wee races that populate the game, most notably gnomes and kobolds.

ENCOUNTER R1: OUTRIDERS

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

5 ghoul ambushers (G)

One of the ghouls is not placed at the beginning of the combat, because the fallen trader does not animate until the fight has already begun. The characters begin the combat spread out amid the wreckage of the campsite, each near to what they were investigating.

When the ghouls attack, read:

A shrieking howl erupts from the woods as four emaciated humanoids burst from the underbrush and tear toward you in leaping bounds.

If a character succeeds at a DC 23 Perception check, read:

A slight rustle of leaves and a sudden quieting of the forest noise catch your ear. You are not as alone as you appear.

Tactics

Characters who succeeded on the Perception check can act in the surprise round; the others are caught unawares.

The ghouls pounce on the weakest or most isolated character, using *bounding leap* to clear difficult terrain and to knock characters prone on the charge. A ghoul abandons its current target only if it proves resistant to its attacks and an easier looking meal presents itself.

On the third round, the fallen trader animates as another ghoul. Characters with a passive Perception score less than 16 grant combat advantage to the freshly risen ghoul for its first turn.

The ghouls fight until three have been slain, at which point a ghoul who is not grabbing someone attempts to flee, snatching up a fallen combatant from either side as a traveling snack.

5 Ghoul Ambushers (G)	**Level 7 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40	**Initiative** +10
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +9
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
⸸ **Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will**	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Bounding Leap ✦ Recharge ⚅	
Effect: The ghoul jumps up to 8 squares. A ghoul can expend this power as a free action during a charge to jump up to 8 squares in place of moving normally. If it does so and hits, the target falls prone in addition to the attack's results.	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Worry ✦ At-Will**	
Trigger: A grabbed creature attempts to escape.	
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	
Skills Athletics +10, Stealth +13	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+4)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Trees: The large trees are blocking terrain and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check, with strong limbs beginning 2d4 + 1 squares up.

Underbrush: The squares of thick underbrush are difficult terrain and are indicated on the map as such. These squares also grant cover.

Collapsed Tent: The fallen tent is difficult terrain and a creature that moves across the tent must succeed on a DC 16 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

ENCOUNTER R2: HOUSE CRASHING

Encounter Level 9 (2,100 XP)

Setup

4 starving ghouls (S)
12 mob ghouls (M)

The characters are placed in the common room, most likely clustered about Byron. Place the indicated ghouls at the start of the encounter; the others arrive later.

4 Starving Ghouls (S)	Level 7 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300 each
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +3
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Feeding Frenzy** ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Blood Lust** ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the ghoul becomes bloodied.	
Effect (Free Action): Feeding frenzy recharges and the ghoul uses it immediately against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 9 (+3)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 9 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

When the encounter begins, read:

Terrible howling echoes from all around the farmhouse as whatever lurks in the fields outside moves to attack. "Hold the door!" Byron shouts frantically.

12 Mob Ghouls (M)	Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Swarm Over	
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+2)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

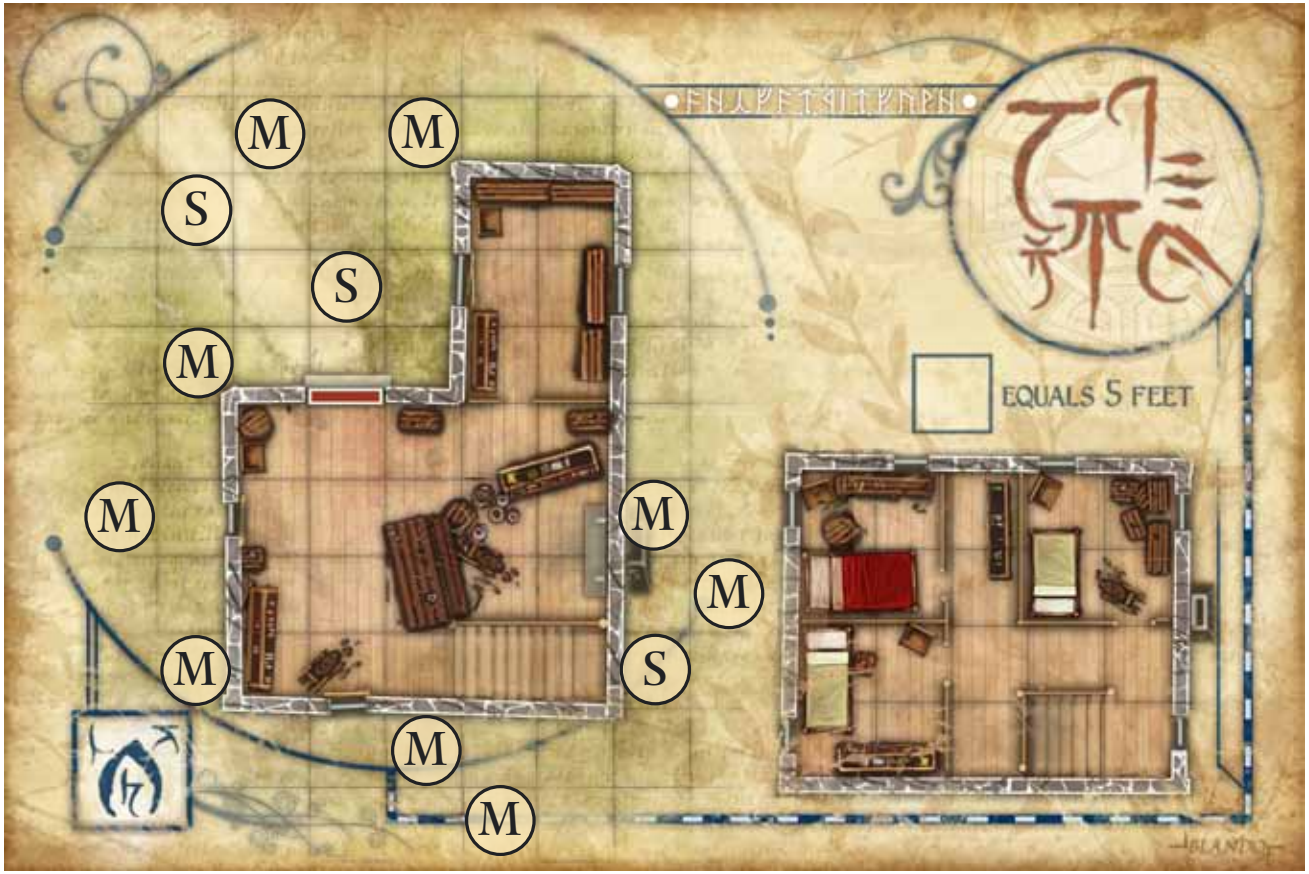
Tactics

The ghouls throw themselves at the house, attempting to tear open the windows and smash down the door. The starving ghoul nearest the door hurls itself at it immediately. Another leads the majority of the mob ghouls in an attack on the ground floor windows. The remaining starving ghoul and four mob ghouls scale the exterior of the house and attempt to gain entry through the windows there. A character hears the ghouls clambering up the building with a DC 23 Perception check, but their howls alert everyone once they have made it in. The ghouls not placed initially appear at the start of round three.

The ghouls take any opportunity to attack characters that move near the windows, with the aim of pulling one outside through the window to be devoured. A character outside is swarmed by any ghouls that can see her and can move adjacent; others continue their assault or rush through any opening the character might have left behind. Once a breach is created, any ghoul that can do so jumps through, hurling itself upon the nearest or weakest prey as normal. Ghouls favor bull rushing or dragging characters outside, where they can dine in peace, over other attacks if the opportunity arises. The starving ghouls push their way to the front of any attack, uncaring for their survival.

If a ghoul attempts to attack one of the family members, assume that the first round of attacks from the ghoul are turned aside, but if the ghoul is allowed a second, unmolested round of attacks, the family member is knocked unconscious and the ghoul attempts to run off with them.

The starving ghouls fight to the death, but the mob ghouls break and flee if three of the starving ghouls are dead and most of their brethren have fallen.



Features of the Area

Illumination: The light filtering through the boarded windows counts as dim light. Once a window or door is smashed open, the lighting becomes bright.

Furniture: The piled furniture is difficult terrain and provides cover to those sheltering behind it.

Boarded Windows: Haphazardly covered with sturdy boards, the windows act much like walls initially. A DC 13 Strength check, which can be assisted, tears off enough boards to allow attacks to cross, but the window grants superior cover. A second successful check leaves the window open enough for creatures to cross, although it counts as difficult terrain and grants cover. These checks take a –2 penalty for each enemy adjacent to the window.

Door: The door has only a simple latch and does not keep out the ghouls for long. If a character braces the door, a ghoul can gain entry by making a bull rush with a –2 penalty against the character.

ENCOUNTER R3: CROSSING THE WHITE FIELDS

Encounter Level 8 (1,850 XP)

Setup

4 field ghouls (F)
6 mob ghouls (M)

The characters, and the Westfelds, begin near the eastern edge of the map if they are escorting the family, or along the western edge if not. The ghouls are not placed at the beginning of the encounter.

The fields continue in all directions. The map represents only the point at which the heaviest attacks take place and if the characters need more space, feel free to expand the map with other, similar terrain or rotate the provided map to create new sections of the fields.

When the encounter begins, read:

The rippling fields stretch out before you, a vast ocean of chest-high grain and grass.

Tactics

The hidden ghouls lurk until spotted or until the characters are within striking distance before pouncing. One field ghoul from those not placed initially enters from a random map edge each round after the first. The three remaining mob ghouls arrive together on a random edge during the third turn.

The ghouls prefer to attack targets at least 4 squares from help, with wounded or otherwise weaker prey taken next. If a ghoul is engaged with multiple opponents, it retreats into the grain, dragging its meal with it or moving to circle around and find an easier target. The field ghouls harry tougher prey, launching attacks before falling back to the safety of the grain.

The Westfelds are not hardened adventurers and flee wildly from any ghouls that approach. During their terrified flight they might run back to the east or even separate themselves from the group, but the adults keep themselves between the ghouls and the children if at all possible. Characters can attempt to rally a group of fleeing Westfelds and get them back in line and moving in the proper direction with a DC 23 Diplomacy or Intimidate check as a minor action. The Westfelds take their turns last in the round and move a maximum of 4 squares through the grain or 5 when fleeing randomly on their turn. When a ghoul attacks a family member, the target's wild flailing and dodging defeats the first round of attacks from a ghoul, but if the ghoul has an unmolested second round to attack, it knocks the Westfeld unconscious and attempts to run off with him or her. Any Westfelds that move off the western map edge (note that being carried off this edge by a ghoul counts as dead, not rescued) are safe. The encounter ends when all the surviving Westfelds and characters have moved off the western edge.

If the characters decide to act as bait instead of escorting the Westfelds, they must keep the attention of the ghouls so the family can reach the far side of the field safely. For each of the following a character earns 1 *attention point*:

- ✦ Being at least 5 squares from the nearest character
- ✦ Succeeding on a DC 16 Bluff check to feign vulnerability (a minor action)
- ✦ Being or falling prone
- ✦ Making a run action
- ✦ Dealing 10 damage to himself or herself as a minor action to spread the scent of blood (a DC 16 Heal check as part of the action reduces the damage to 5)
- ✦ Taking damage in combat

The party must accumulate at least 8 attention points each round. The characters can fail to do so only once. After that, each round they fail to accumulate 8, one of the Westfelds is attacked and eaten by a ghoul they failed to draw in. The characters must accumulate 60 attention points in total and move off the eastern edge of the map to complete the encounter.

Regardless of whether the characters run as escorts or diversions, the commotion draws ghouls. If the encounter continues into the sixth round, 1d4–1 mob ghouls arrive from a random map edge. They continue to do so for as long as the encounter continues.

6 Mob Ghouls (M)	**Level 7 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Swarm Over	
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+2)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

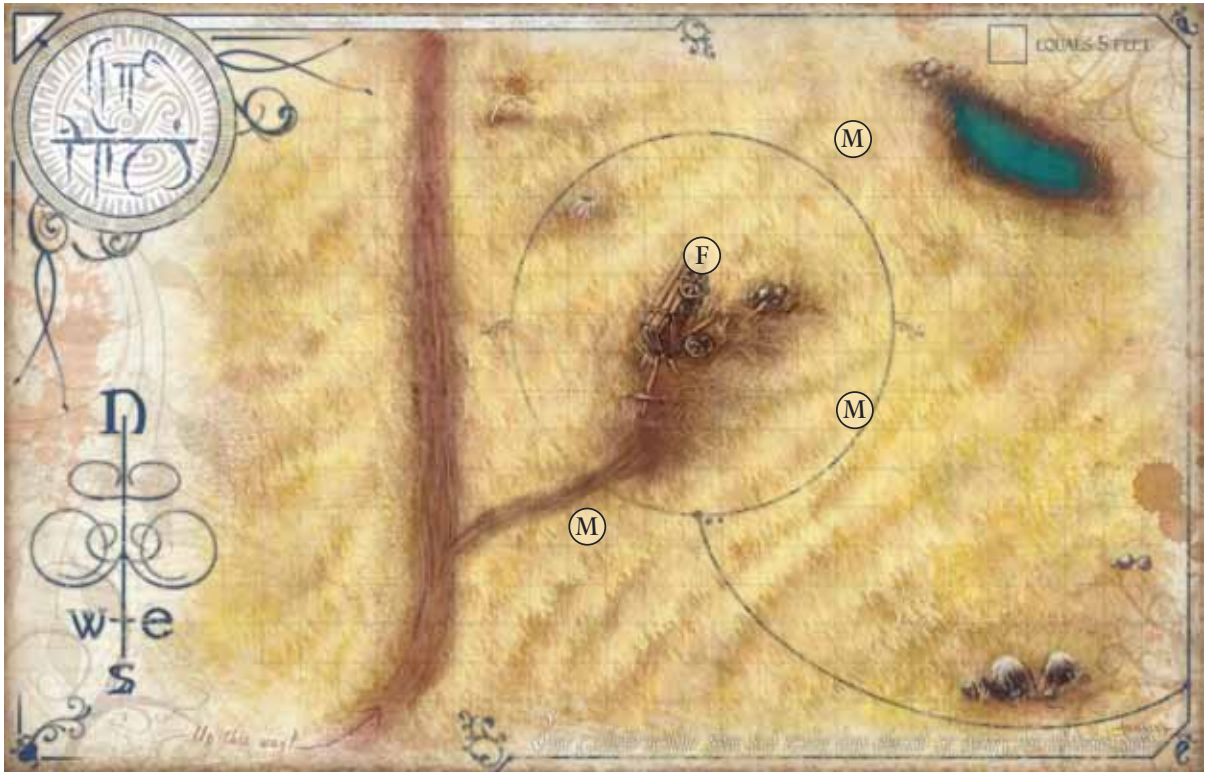
4 Field Ghouls (F)	Level 8 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 350 each
HP 72; **Bloodied** 36	**Initiative** +14
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 19	**Perception** +11
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Traits	
Pick Them Off	
The ghoul gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls when it is adjacent to only one enemy and that enemy is not adjacent to any of its allies.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
⸸ **Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will**	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). The ghoul gains 10 temporary hit points.	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Gouging Grasp ✦ At-Will**	
Trigger: A grabbed creature attempts to escape.	
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.	
Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +15	
Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 22 (+10) **Wis** 15 (+6)	
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 11 (+4)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Grain and Grass: The majority of the map is covered with a dense growth of grasses. A creature moving through the grain must make a DC 16 Athletics check or count grain-filled squares as difficult terrain for the round. The ghouls never count the grain as difficult terrain. Creatures in the grass gain cover against ranged attacks and melee attacks that do not originate from a square adjacent to it.

Open Ground and Paths: These squares are not difficult terrain.



ENCOUNTER H1: GHOUL COUNTRY

Encounter Level 5 (1,050 XP)

Setup

The ruins of Hampstead are overrun with thousands of ravenous ghouls desperately searching for their next meal of screaming meat. Moving about without alerting them is as crucial as it is challenging, because even the slightest noise or sighting risks bringing an unending tide of the hungry dead crashing over the characters.

The wailing howls of the ghouls, while terrifying before, here tear from the corrupted throats of hundreds, echoing endlessly throughout the town and melding into a hellish cacophony that worries at the edges of sanity. The constant assault frays at the nerves, causing even simple tasks to become difficult. At the beginning of the skill challenge, each character is subject to the following attack:

Attack: +18 vs. the *lower* of Fortitude or Will
Hit: Target takes a -2 penalty on skill checks until the end of this skill challenge.

Ghoul Country

The ruins of Hampstead are haunted by hordes of flesh eating ghouls. The party must move cautiously or risk a messy death.

Level: 8 (XP 1,050)

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

Primary Skills: Endurance, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise

Endurance (DC 16; maximum of 3 successes): The constant strain would buckle lesser people, but the character shoulders the burden of his or her allies and trudges on.

Perception (DC 16; maximum of 3 successes): Keeping an ear to the ground and an eye out for lurking ghouls, the character steers the party around potential pitfalls and encounters.

Stealth (DC 16; maximum of 3 successes): Avoiding detection is key, but not everyone shares the character's flair for slipping from shadow to shadow. Attempts to use this skill take a -2 penalty for each party member that is not trained in Stealth.

Streetwise (DC 23; maximum of 3 successes): The character is at home in the urban jungle, able to navigate quickly through the maze of streets and alleys.

Secondary Skills: Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Religion.

Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Religion (DC 16; no maximum): Through encouragement, reassurance, or bullying, you help your allies to keep their wits in this dire place. A character who succeeds on one of these checks does not earn a success in the skill challenge but instead removes the -2 penalty on skill checks for one other character for the remainder of the skill challenge.

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Thievery

Acrobatics (DC 23; no maximum): The character maneuvers through rough spots, dodges back from ghouls, or dances along ledges to open new paths. A character who succeeds on this check does not earn a success in the skill challenge, but success grants a +2 bonus to the next Perception or Stealth check. Failure imposes a -2 penalty to the next Perception or Stealth check.

Athletics (DC 23; no maximum): Scaling buildings to gain a better view or leaping gaps to forge ahead, the character turns physical might to the cause. A character who succeeds on this check does not earn a success in the skill challenge, but success grants a +2 bonus to the next Perception or Streetwise check. Likewise, failure does not count towards the challenge but instead imposes a -2 penalty to the next Perception or Streetwise check.

Thievery (DC 16; maximum of 2 successes): By opening locked doors or windows quickly and quietly, the character facilitates passage through the sheltered interiors of intact buildings. A character who succeeds on this check does not earn a success in the skill challenge, but success grants a +2 bonus to the next Stealth or Streetwise check. Likewise, failure does not count toward the challenge but instead imposes a -2 penalty to the next Stealth or Streetwise check.

Success: The characters encounter only a few easily-dispatched ghoul minions while crossing the ruins and reach their destination without hazardous detours.

Failure: Each character loses a healing surge immediately. The characters draw the attention of one starving ghoul and 1d6 + 5 mob ghouls. Set up a battle map with clogged streets, burned-out buildings, and other suitable features. Each round after the first, 1d6 - 1 mob ghouls arrive from a random direction. If a 6 is rolled, one starving ghoul arrives instead of five mob ghouls.

The incoming tide of ghouls cannot be overcome by fighting. If the players don't seem to be realizing that, emphasize to them that the ghouls' screeches are spreading away from the scene, and it's the sound that is drawing in more undead. The characters must flee the map to escape. If they leave across the map side that the first group of ghouls was blocking, they arrive at their destination and the skill challenge ends. If they leave in another direction, they remove two failures but must continue the skill challenge, with one failure and however many successes they've scored up to this point. You can substitute other ghouls and change this fight however you see fit. Make it difficult for characters to escape in a way that ends the skill challenge but easier for them to escape in directions that keep the skill challenge going.

ENCOUNTER H2: TIREN'S STAND

Encounter Level 8 (1,950 XP)

Setup

3 howling ghouls (H)
12 mob ghouls (M)

The characters are placed around the second story according to what they were doing when the ghouls attacked. Do not place the ghouls that are climbing the southern side until the characters detect them.

When the encounter begins, read:

A soul-freezing howl erupts from the ruins. With a crash, the ghouls thunder through the door, no doubt heading for the stairs. Even more ominous is the scratching and wailing coming from outside the building.

If a character makes a DC 23 Perception check, read:

A soft splintering sound from the south catches your ear. Is something climbing stealthily up the wall?

Tactics

The ghouls near the stairs rush up them to attack while the rest move to climb the exterior and enter through the windows. The ghouls on the southern side are moving slowly so as not to attract attention; they leap through the windows and join the fray on the third round.

The howling ghouls attempt to use their *screaming terror* to push characters out through the windows and try to keep several foes within their aura. The mob ghouls swarm their foes, targeting the weakest first, as normal. Ghouls climbing the building try to pull characters out of windows and drop them to the ground, and those inside bull rush characters out if the opportunity arises. A character that falls through a window is swarmed by any who haven't made their way inside yet.

At the start of the fifth round, and every round thereafter, 1d6–1 mob ghouls enter from a random map edge. If five mob ghouls would have arrived, a single howling ghoul (or other, similar ghoul of your choice) comes instead.

The horde continues to build until the characters have killed at least twelve minion and three nonminion ghouls, at which point the survivors break and retreat temporarily, ending the encounter.

12 Mob Ghouls (M) — **Level 7 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 75 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17 **Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Swarm Over
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Skills Stealth +13
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

3 Howling Ghouls (H) — **Level 8 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 350 each

HP 92; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +10
Speed 8, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

Unnerving Howl (fear)
Living creatures within 5 squares take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Screaming Terror (fear, thunder) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 4d6 + 4 thunder damage. The ghoul pushes the target 3 squares, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Gouging Grasp ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A grabbed creature attempts to escape.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +13
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

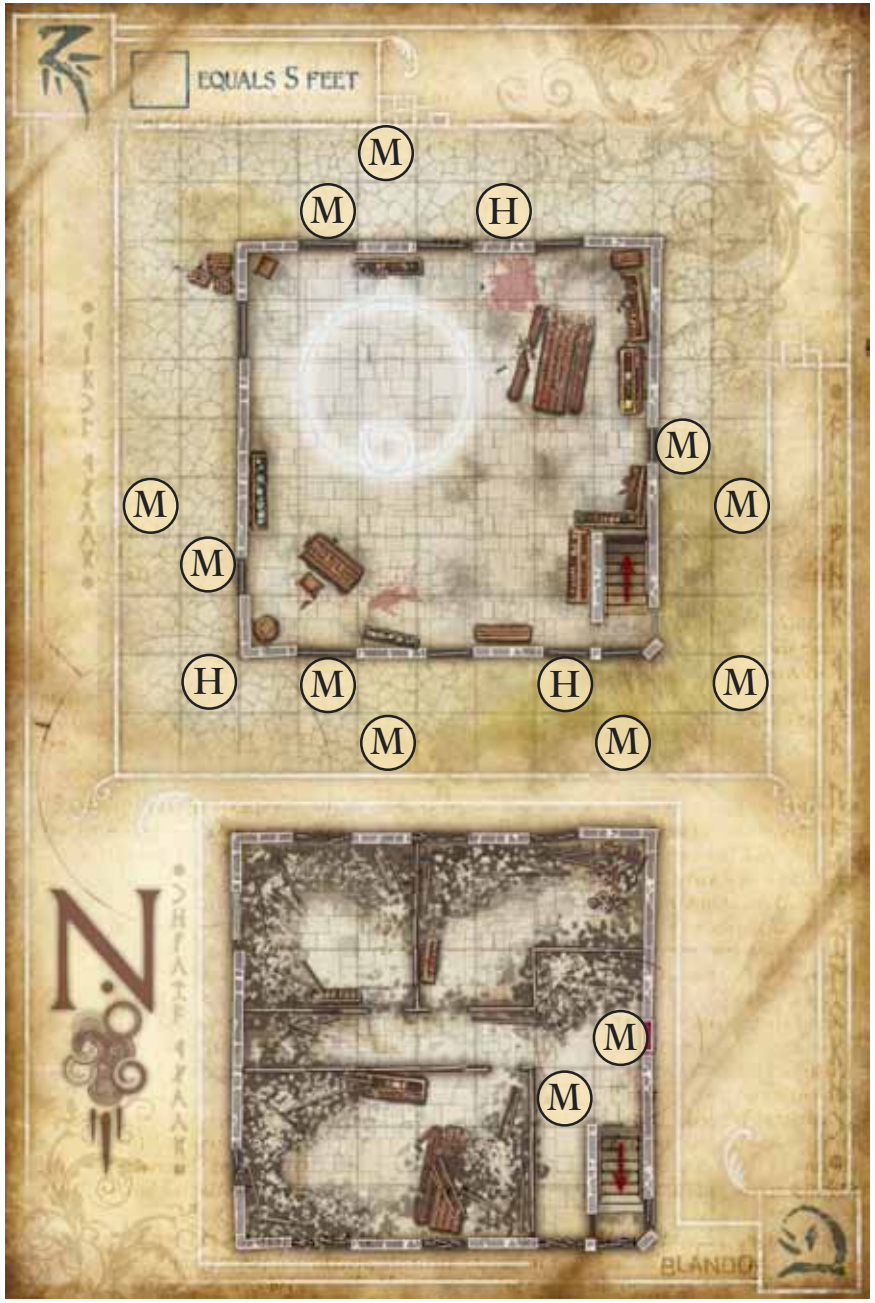
Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Furniture: The upturned furniture is difficult terrain and provides cover to those sheltering behind it.

Windows: These large windows were at one time fitted with glass panes, but now stand empty. They are large enough for creatures to pass through freely. They stand almost 20 feet above the street below. A creature that falls from one takes 2d10 damage and falls prone, as normal. Creatures attacking across the window have cover from each other. A creature wishing to target something that is climbing the wall and is not adjacent to the window or that is on the ground from within the building must be adjacent to the window.

Shelves: The shelves are built of sturdy hardwood and are heavy. A creature can topple a standing shelf it is adjacent to with a DC 16 Strength check as a standard action. The falling shelf makes the following attack against anything in the squares encompassed by its length and 2 squares out from the wall: +11 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone and is restrained (save ends).



ENCOUNTER H3: CLEARING THE GROUNDS

Encounter Level 8 (1,850 XP)

Setup

1 howling ghoul (H)
3 scarred ghouls (S)
8 mob ghouls (M)

The characters enter along the western map edge. Do not place the ghouls that are out of the characters' vision unless the characters succeed on the Perception check. If the characters succeed on a DC 20 Stealth check, the ghouls fail to detect their approach.

When the encounter begins, read:

A handful of ghouls sniff and scrabble about aimlessly near the Chapel of St. Lucian. The iron courtyard gate stands open, but the doors to the chapel are intact.

If a character succeeds on a DC 20 Perception check, read:

Scratching and the occasional wail sounds as if it's coming from the far side of the chapel.

Tactics

Any character that succeeded on the Stealth check gets the drop on the ghouls and can act during the surprise round.

The ghouls that can see the characters rush forward recklessly, leaping at the chance to feed, while the ones that could not see the characters rush around the chapel on the second turn. If any of the characters are engaged within the courtyard, a few of the ghouls that started out of sight climb the lower sections of the chapel and dive upon the characters.

If the characters trap some of the ghouls within the courtyard by shutting the gate, those trapped grab through the bars at any character in range, scrabbling at the bars and latched gate if none are within reach. On the second consecutive round of having no viable target, the ghouls move to climb over the low sections of the chapel. Similarly, if the characters lock themselves in the courtyard, the ghouls left outside climb in if they have no one to attack for 2 rounds.

At the start of the fifth round, and every round thereafter, 1d6–1 mob ghouls enter from a random map edge. If five mob ghouls would have arrived, a single scarred or howling ghoul (or other, similar ghoul of your choice) comes instead.

The horde continues to build until the characters retreat into the chapel, which causes the majority of the assembled ghouls to lose interest and wander off.

8 Mob Ghouls (M) — **Level 7 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 75 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17 **Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Swarm Over
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Skills Stealth +13

Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 20 (+8)	**Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 11 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

1 Howling Ghoul (H) — **Level 8 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 350

HP 92; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +10
Speed 8, climb 4 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

Unnerving Howl (fear)
Living creatures within 5 squares take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Screaming Terror (fear, thunder) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 4d6 + 4 thunder damage. The ghoul pushes the target 3 squares, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Gouging Grasp ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A grabbed creature attempts to escape.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +13

Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 19 (+8)	**Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 20 (+9)	**Int** 11 (+4)	**Cha** 12 (+5)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

3 Scarred Ghouls (S)	Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300 each
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41	**Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +9
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
Claws ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Screaming Terror (fear, thunder) **✦ Encounter**	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +10 vs. Will	
Hit: 4d6 + 4 thunder damage. The ghoul pushes the target 3 squares, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
Seeking Claws ✦ At-Will	
Trigger: A creature adjacent to the ghoul shifts.	
Effect (Free Action): The ghoul makes a *claws* attack against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+4)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

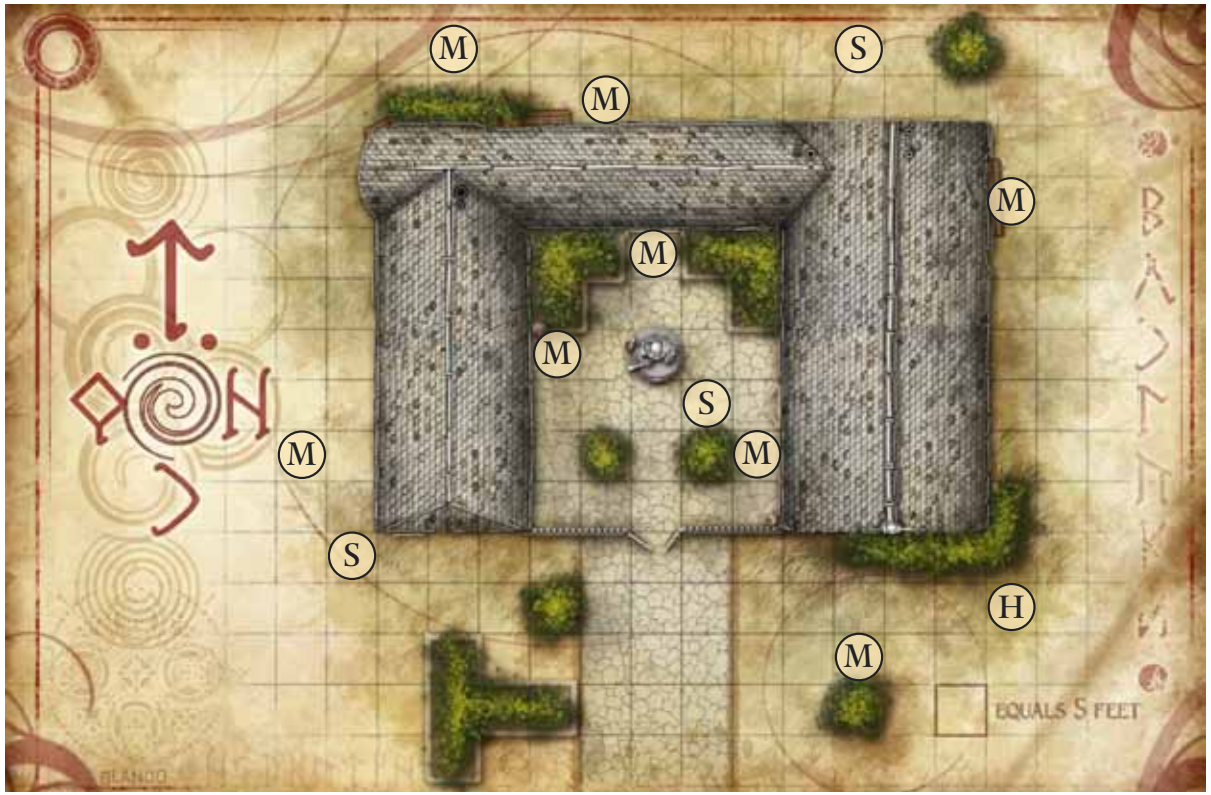
Trees and Shrubs: Squares containing trees or shrubs are difficult terrain and provide cover.

Statue: The large statue depicts a human or half elf, presumably St. Lucian, wearing robes over armor and carrying a staff. It functions as blocking terrain.

Iron Bars and Gate: The western side of the courtyard is bounded by a wall of iron bars wrought into decorative patterns and set within a series of stone arches. Attacks can be made through the bars, but they grant cover. In the center of the wall is a matching gate that currently hangs open. A character can shut the gate as a standard action, or as part of a charge or bull rush, which causes it to latch. The ghouls are not bright enough to figure out how to unlatch the gate.

Chapel Doors: These solid doors are made from heavy slabs of hardwood reinforced with metal banding and have resisted the ghouls' attempts to gain entry. They are locked and can be opened with a DC 16 Thievery check (only one attempt allowed).

Discarded Remains: These three scattered piles of gnawed and broken bones and shredded, blood-stained cloth are all that remain of an unfortunate priest devoured by the ghouls. A character can search through a pile as a standard action. A DC 11 Perception check uncovers an iron key that unlocks the chapel doors.



ENCOUNTER H4: THE RIVER LEBE

Encounter Level 7 (1,725 XP)

Setup

1 starving ghoul (S)
3 mob ghouls (M)
4 lacedons (L)

The characters enter along the western map edge. Do not place the lacedons on the map until they surface to attack. If the characters succeed on a DC 20 Stealth check, the ghouls don't notice them.

Be sure to review the material for aquatic combat on page 45 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and page 183 of the *Player's Handbook*.

When the encounter begins, read:

The wide span of stone that bridges the river is cluttered with the debris of failed defenses. The water running under it has an unsettling pink tinge to it, and what appear to be human bones are wedged against the starlings and into the bank. A handful of ghouls scrabble about in the wreckage on the bridge or in the shadow of buildings across the river.

If a character makes a DC 27 Perception check or a DC 23 Nature check, read:

Flickers of movement amid the eddies catch your eye. Something is lurking in these waters.

Tactics

Any character that succeeded on the Stealth check approach unnoticed and can act during the surprise round.

Once the land-based ghouls spot the characters, they let loose their characteristic howls and charge. The aquatic ghouls wait until the battle is joined before clambering up the sides of the bridge behind the front lines, where they go after softer, back rank characters and attempt to either melee them down or force them into the river with bull rushes or by pulling them while grabbed. Once in the water with a character, the ghouls try everything they can to keep them from escaping to dry land. A character that is dragged off by ghouls in the river suffers the same grisly fate as those that disappear into the dark. The land ghouls have no interest in forcing the characters into the river; they would much rather drag their meal somewhere safe and dry to enjoy it.

3 Mob Ghouls (M)	**Level 7 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Swarm Over	
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.	
Standard Actions	
ⓘ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+2)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

1 Starving Ghoul (S)	**Level 7 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48	**Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +3
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
ⓘ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage.	
⚕ **Feeding Frenzy ✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⚅	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 10 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
⚕ **Blood Lust ✦ At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the ghoul becomes bloodied.	
Effect (Free Action): Feeding frenzy recharges and the ghoul uses it immediately against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 9 (+3)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 9 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

4 Lacedons (L)	Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic, undead)	XP 300 each
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41	**Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +9
Speed 8, climb 4, swim 8	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Traits	
Drowning Embrace	
A creature that ends its turn grabbed by the lacedon loses a healing surge. A creature with no remaining healing surges instead takes 10 damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
⸸ **Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will**	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d6 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Waterlogged ✦ At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature adjacent to the lacedon hits it.	
Attack (Free Action): Melee 1 (triggering creature); +12 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target falls prone.	
Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+4)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

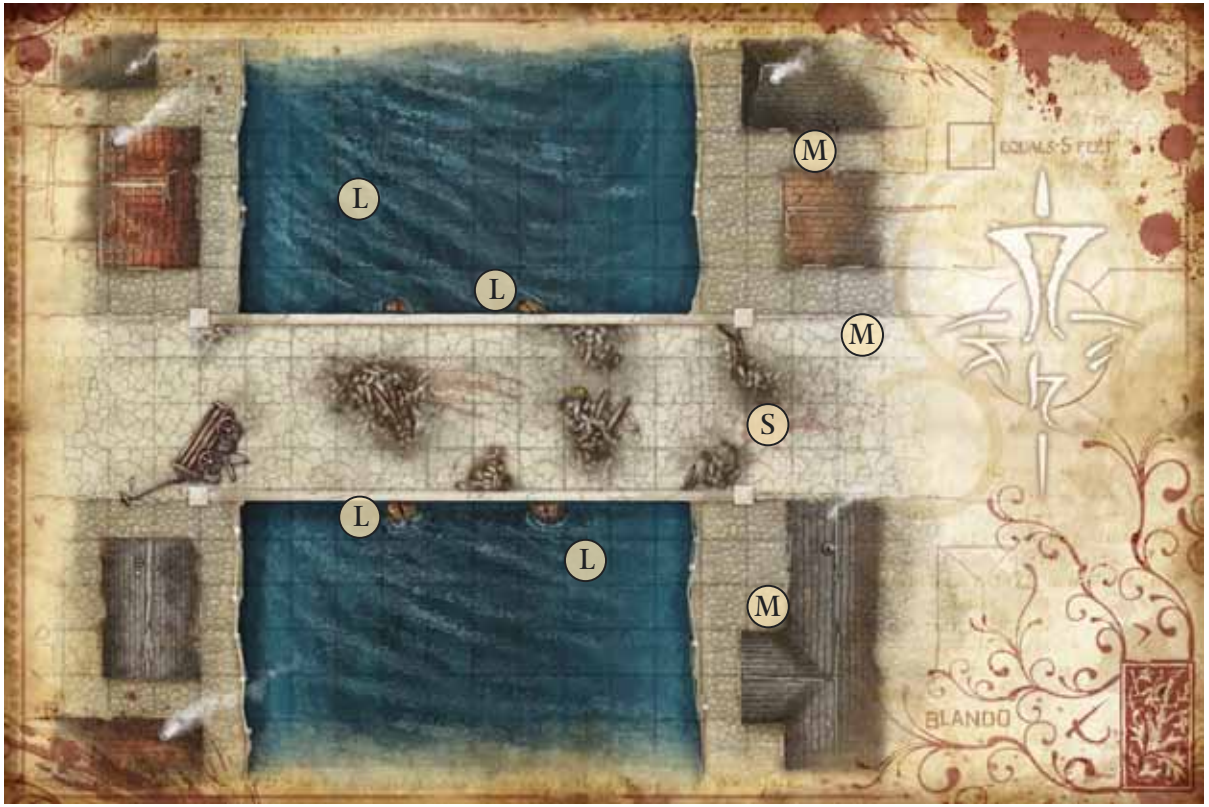
Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Debris: Squares containing debris are difficult terrain and provide cover.

Bridge: The bridge is solidly constructed and effectively immune to damage. Its surface is 10 feet above the surface of the river. Climbing the stonework sections of the bridge requires a DC 25 Athletics check, but scrambling onto a wooden starling, which extends 1 square out of the water, requires only a DC 15 Athletics check. The squares beneath the bridge that lie directly between the visible portions of the supports are solid stonework, and all others are navigable river.

River Lebe: The river flowing under the bridge is cold and strong, with a current moving to the south at 2 squares per round that kicks up enough mud for it to count as lightly obscured. The water is calm (DC 10) on the open river, but the squares under and adjacent to the bridge count as rough (DC 15). The river is 2 squares deep everywhere not adjacent to the bank, where it is only a single square deep.



ENCOUNTER H5: LOVE'S LOSS

Encounter Level 7 (1,700 XP)

Setup

Beth Harwick (B)
2 scarred ghouls (S)
8 mob ghouls (M)

Place the characters around the house, in accordance with what they were investigating. Place a character descending the ladder in the cellar. If a character stuck his or her head in to look instead, place that character adjacent to the trapdoor. Do not place the ghouls until they act or enter the field.

When the encounter begins, read:

The quiet is shattered by a piercing, shrieking howl as a twisted figure hurtles from the darkness to claim whoever foolishly entered its domain. A chorus of hungry wails answers from outside the house.

If a character adjacent to the trapdoor or one who enters the cellar succeeds on a DC 23 Perception Check, read:

A slight noise from the dark alerts you just as you feel something's gaze crawl over your skin.

Tactics

Characters that succeeded on the Perception check do not grant Beth Harwick combat advantage. Beth bursts from hiding to savage the character who was brave or foolish enough to enter the cellar. She leads off with a *smash aside* attack in an attempt to isolate her target by sliding it away from any allies.

Beth is not subtle and does not bother to conserve resources, burning through her limited use powers as soon as they recharge. She focuses her attacks on anyone who moves into the cellar, hoping to kill and/or drag them into a quiet corner, but follows retreating characters up onto the ground level. If a vulnerable character moves adjacent to the trapdoor, Beth attempts to drag the character into the cellar for an easy snack.

The other ghouls move onto the map (place them where indicated) on their first turn, but cannot make it farther. They rush to attack, leaping through the windows and charging through the door if the doors are not barricaded against them. The ghouls desperately try to force their way past characters blocking the entrances, but they take any opportunity to grab a character and pull him or her out of the house to be set upon by the ghouls there.

At the start of the fifth round, and every round thereafter, 1d6–1 mob ghouls enter from a random map edge. If five mob ghouls would have arrived, a single scarred ghoul (or other similar ghoul of your choice) comes instead.

The horde continues to build until the characters have destroyed Beth Harwick, seven minion ghouls, and two nonminion ghouls, at which point the scavengers retreat temporarily, ending the encounter. The characters can also fight their way off the map, but need to have finished Beth to complete the minor quest. Although not as heroic, if the characters hole up in the cellar and can keep the trapdoor braced against the ghouls for several minutes (see "Features of the Area" below), all but a few have wandered away when they eventually move out.

Beth Harwick	**Level 10 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300
HP 129; **Bloodied** 64	**Initiative** +10
AC 22, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20	**Perception** +11
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and Beth grabs the target (escape DC 18).	
⸸ **Mouthful of Flesh ✦ At-Will**	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 5d6 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). Beth gains 10 temporary hit points.	
⸸ **Feeding Frenzy ✦ Encounter**	
Effect: Beth makes a *mouthful of flesh* attack against each enemy adjacent to her, even if the enemy is not immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
⸸ **Smash Aside ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage. Beth slides the target up to 4 squares, and the target falls prone and is dazed (save ends). Beth can use this attack in place of a basic attack as part of a charge.	
Skills Athletics +15, Stealth +15	
Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 20 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+6)	
Con 19 (+9) **Int** 11 (+5) **Cha** 11 (+5)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light. The cellar squares adjacent to the ladder are instead filled with Dim Light. The rest of the cellar is lightless.

Debris: Squares containing debris are difficult terrain and provide cover.

2 Scarred Ghouls (S)	Level 7 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 300 each
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41	**Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +9
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
⸸ **Mouthful of Flesh** ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d6 + 3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
✧ **Screaming Terror** (fear, thunder) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +10 vs. Will	
Hit: 4d6 + 4 thunder damage. The ghoul pushes the target 3 squares, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
Seeking Claws ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature adjacent to the ghoul shifts.	
Effect (Free Action): The ghoul makes a *claws* attack against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +12	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+4)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Ladder: The ladder (AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, 20 hp) feels a bit rickety but is set firmly into the wall.

Windows and Door: The windows and door have been smashed through and do not keep the ghouls at bay. Moving across a window or door costs one extra square. Characters can try to block the entrances with tables, cabinets, and even the fallen door. A ghoul standing next to a barricaded door or window can batter its way through a hasty barrier with a DC 16 Strength check made as a standard action. If a character is on the opposite side of that barricaded door or window, then the Strength check of a ghoul trying to batter through the opening is opposed by an Athletics check made by the character (as a free action). If the ghoul succeeds in this check, the barricade is demolished and a character who is bracing it (if any) is affected as if hit by a successful bull rush. Note that ghouls and characters can use Aid Another to good effect in this situation.

8 Mob Ghouls (M)	Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Swarm Over	
Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+2)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

Trapdoor: The simple wooden door can be held against entry in the same way as the windows or door if the characters choose to flee into the cellar or trap Beth within it.

Beth's Ring: Once the characters destroy Beth, they discover that she still wore her wedding ring. The simple gold band has an etching of a flower that has been worn almost smooth.

ENCOUNTER H6: VISIONS OF HELL

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

Setup

Elisa
Emotional backlash

The characters are spread around the house according to their investigations. No monsters are placed initially.

When the encounter begins, read:

Frost begins to creep over unattended objects and your breath becomes visible as the temperature suddenly plummets. Soul-crushing fear and creeping insanity seep from the very walls, tearing at the edges of your mind. A young girl's giggle echoes through the house, somehow more ominous than any bestial roar.

The encounter in this house consists of a skill challenge, but the characters must also face creatures while trying to win through the challenge.

The terrible things that took place here have left an indelible mark upon the house, and that emotional imprint of the terror and insanity is strong enough to manifest tangibly. Only by delving into the heart of the madness can one hope to unravel the mystery and bring peace to this place, but willfully exposing oneself to such darkness is not without its own risks.

Emotional Backlash

Level: 8 (XP 1,050)

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

Special: Terrible visions of suffering and unspeakable urges to feast on quivering human flesh crash over the characters as the house begins to rouse itself. The influence the house exerts grows steadily as it awakes. Starting on the second round, at the start of each character's turn, he or she experiences the following attack:

Attack: +8 vs. Will
Hit: The target's Will is reduced by 2 until the end of its next turn. The target also takes a -2 penalty on all skill checks (save ends). If this attack hits while the target's Will is reduced for any reason, the target is dominated until the end of its turn. A dominated character makes a basic attack against its nearest ally (charging if necessary).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Insight, Religion

Arcana (DC 16; standard action; no maximum): You weaken the evil that festers here by unbinding a portion of the power coursing through this place.

Insight (DC 16; standard action; no maximum): Embracing the horror is the fastest way to reach the truth, but attempting to understand such madness wears at the character's sanity. A character who succeeds on this check gains a success for the challenge. A character who fails at this check suffers a –2 penalty to Will which lasts until the end of the encounter. This is not cumulative with the penalty from the house's attack.

Religion (DC 16; standard action; no maximum): By performing the rites that were never received by those who suffered here, the character allows the restless spirits to gain a semblance of peace and cuts into the hatred and fear that powers this place.

Secondary Skills: Diplomacy, Endurance, Intimidate

Diplomacy, Intimidate (DC 16; minor action): The character talks his or her allies down from the insane courses of action the house would see carried out or keeps their minds on the battle with shouted commands and orders. A character who succeeds on this check does not earn a success in the skill challenge, but success gives a +2 bonus to the next primary skill check in the challenge.

Endurance (DC 16; minor action): The madness pushes in from all sides, but the character endures it. A character who succeeds on this check automatically resists the house's Will attack at the start of the character's next turn.

Success: The characters unravel the truth and put an end to the house's evil. The penalties immediately fade, the attacks stop, and they learn the information contained within the "Background" section of this adventure.

Failure: The emotional backlash reaches critical mass before the characters can disperse it. The emotions contained within the house burn themselves out in a final burst of tormenting visions. The characters fall prone, lose a healing surge, and are dazed as the terrible events contained within the "Background" section play out in their mind's eye (save ends). The Will penalties fade away and the attacks stop, but if Elisa was defeated during the challenge, she uses *hideous transformation*. One howling ghoul and four mob ghouls (or other combination of your choice) appear in unoccupied squares in the house.

Echo of Despair **Level 7 Minion Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +10
AC 21, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +4
Speed 8, climb 4, phasing Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Hopelessness (fear) ✦ **Aura** 2
A living creature in the aura takes a -2 penalty to saving throws.

Standard Actions

Draining Touch (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: Ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends), and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Echo of Madness **Level 7 Minion Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +4
Speed 8, climb 4, phasing Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Psychosis (fear) ✦ **Aura** 2
Creatures in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls when targeting an ally.

Standard Actions

Touch of Insanity (charm, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 8 psychic damage. The target can choose to take no damage and instead make a basic or at-will attack of the echoes' choice against its nearest ally as a free action.

Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Elisa **Level 8 Elite Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 700

HP 146; **Bloodied** 73 **Initiative** +12
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23 **Perception** +10
Speed 8, climb 4, teleport 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Regeneration
Elisa regains 5 hit points whenever she starts her turn and has at least 1 hit point.

Standard Actions

Swipe ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). If *hideous transformation* is active, Elisa grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Mental Trauma (psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Will
Hit: 4d6 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 10 psychic damage. The target takes a –2 to all defenses (save ends both).

Echoes of Past Torment ✦ **Recharge** when all echoes are destroyed
Effect: Elisa summons 1d4 of any combination of echoes of despair and echoes of madness. They appear in unoccupied squares anywhere within the house.

Flesh Gobble (healing) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Requirement: Elisa must have used *hideous transformation*.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage. The target is dazed (save ends), and Elisa regains a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt.

Triggered Actions

Bound Soul
Trigger: Elisa is reduced to 0 hit points.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Elisa is not destroyed. Instead, at the start of her next turn, she reappears with 35 hit points in an unoccupied square within the house.

Hideous Transformation
Trigger: When the Emotional Backlash skill challenge ends.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Elisa's form becomes twisted, ravaged, and half eaten. She loses her regeneration and insubstantial traits and can no longer use *bound soul* and *echoes of past torment*. She takes a -2 penalty to all defenses but gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls. She gains access to *flesh gobble*.

Skills Athletics +11, Stealth +13
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 19 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 19 (+8) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 21 (+9)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Tactics

Elisa uses her teleport and phase abilities to move about unhindered, attacking weak characters before retreating to safety to allow her abilities to recharge and her regeneration to heal her. The reinforcements she summons with *echoes of past torment* are normally split fairly evenly between the two, but she begins to favor echoes of madness once the characters take the Will penalty imposed by the skill challenge. The echoes are not brilliant combatants and throw themselves at any target that presents itself, but they do try to keep as many characters as possible within their auras.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Debris: Squares containing debris are difficult terrain and provide cover.

ENCOUNTER H7: THE LORD OF THE WHITE FIELD

Encounter Level 10 (2,550 XP)

Setup

Darien, Ghoul Lord of Hampstead (D)
Brellac Monsen (B)
6 mob ghouls (M)

The map presented assumes the characters fled from the farmhouse (H6) and were run down when they failed the skill challenge. If the characters are facing the ghoul lord at another location, use that map instead. Monsen set his trap there.

When the encounter begins, read:

A gore-caked human clad in bleeding skins blocks the path ahead, flanked by a pack of mangy ghouls. He raises his arms and shouts, "The time for flight has ended. The Ghoul King, Lord of the White Field, Master of the Flesh Eaters, and Chosen Maw of Doresain is come! All flesh to be eaten!" At his proclamation, the soul-draining howls that have been your constant companion in this accursed place rise to a crescendo. Then a bellowing roar pregnant with hatred thunders out as a twisted monster of corded muscle and pierced bone bursts into view.

If a character makes a DC 20 Perception Check, read:

The crazed herald appears to be wearing the tattered robes of the priests of St. Lucian's Chapel under his mantle of flesh.

Tactics

Darien hurls himself into melee and hopes to catch multiple opponents in his area powers and attacks that target adjacent enemies. He fights furiously, but uses his powers to their best effect. He saves *maw of Doresain* for when he requires substantial healing or, but hopefully and, can devastate several characters. He uses *feast of flesh* each round if possible, normally targeting Brellac.

Brellac moves through the fight, cursing characters or sliding them into advantageous positions. He uses *spectral maw* to immobilize as many characters as possible, hoping to set up Darien for a truly destructive *maw of Doresain* attack. Brellac moves through threatened squares and continues to use his ranged powers while in melee, snapping at characters who take the opportunity attacks he provokes with *cannibalistic fervor.*

The ghouls gang up on characters that hang back from the fight or maneuver themselves to flank for Darien. In this encounter they are driven by the will of their lord and as such will not drag characters off the field, instead staying to continue the fight.

At the start of the sixth round, and every round thereafter, 1d6–1 mob ghouls enter from a random map edge. If a 6 is rolled, a single starved, scarred, or howling ghoul (or other, similar ghoul of your choice) comes instead of the mob ghouls.

The ghouls continue to stream in until Darien is slain, at which point his hold on them is broken. Any remaining enemies rout, fleeing recklessly as soon as Darien falls.

Darien, Ghoul Lord of Hampstead (D) — **Level 8 Solo Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 1,750

HP 372; **Bloodied** 186 — **Initiative** +11
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +10
Speed 9, climb 5 — Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

All Flesh is Sacred ✦ Aura 10
Creatures in the aura gain vulnerable 5 all.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and Darien grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Mouthful of Flesh (healing) **✦ At-Will**
Requirement: The target must be immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). Darien regains 10 hit points.

Furious Assault ✦ At-Will
Darien makes a *claws* attack against every adjacent enemy.

Maw of Doresain ✦ Encounter
Effect: Close burst 2 (creatures in the burst); Darien pulls the target 1 square then makes a *mouthful of flesh* attack even if the target is not immobilized, stunned, or unconscious.

Minor Actions

Feast of Flesh (charm, healing) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Close blast 2 (one creature in the blast); +13 vs. Will
Effect: The target makes a single basic or at-will attack of Darien's choice against a creature of Darien's choice. The target gains 10 temporary hit points if its attack hits. The target of the *feast of flesh* attack can choose to be hit automatically.

Triggered Actions

Worry ✦ At-Will
Trigger: A grabbed creature attempts to escape.
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +14

Str 19 (+8)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 21 (+9)	**Int** 11 (+4)	**Cha** 15 (+6)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Brellac Monsen (B)	Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,750
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45	**Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +9
Speed 5	Darkvision

Standard Actions

Crazed Biting ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4 + 3 damage.

Dread Visions (fear, psychic) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +12 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8 + 3 psychic damage, and Brellac slides the target up to 3 squares.

Spectral Maw ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⚅

Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 5d6 + 3 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Minor Actions

Feast of Flesh (charm, healing) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Close blast 2 (one creature in the blast); +13 vs. Will

Effect: The target makes a single basic or at-will attack of Darien's choice against a creature of Monsen's choice. The target gains 10 temporary hit points if its attack hits. The target of the *feast of flesh* attack can choose to be hit automatically.

Triggered Actions

Cannibalistic Fervor ✦ At-Will

Trigger: A creature adjacent to Brellac makes an opportunity attack against Brellac.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Brellac makes a *crazed biting* attack against the triggering creature

Str 15 (+6)	**Dex** 13 (+5)	**Wis** 20 (+9)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 16 (+4)	**Cha** 14 (+6)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

6 Mob Ghouls (M)	Level 7 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +10
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	**Perception** +2
Speed 8, climb 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	

Traits

Swarm Over

Effect: A mob ghoul gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls for every ally adjacent to the target.

Standard Actions

Claws ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 8 damage (10 if the target is grabbed or unconscious), and the ghoul grabs the target (escape DC 16).

Skills Stealth +13

Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 20 (+8)	**Wis** 8 (+2)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 11 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Debris: Squares containing debris are difficult terrain and provide cover.

Buildings: The nearby buildings have been all but demolished by the ghouls in their search for flesh. The smashed doors and windows provide a method of entry, but the interiors are a tumbled ruin and count as difficult terrain.

Fountain: The squares of the fountain are difficult terrain and provide cover.

HEROIC
1-10

CHAOS SCAR™

Head in the Clouds

A Chaos Scar Adventure

By Matt Sernett

Illustration by William O'Connor ✦ Cartography by Jason A. Engle

Head in the Clouds is a short Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for characters of levels 7-9. It takes place in the Chaos Scar at any location you wish. Alternatively, it might start outside the wall and the characters might need to go inside to continue the adventure. The adventure begins when the adventurers notice something ominous in the sky, but instead of offering danger, the floating fortress begs for help. When it crashes, the characters have the opportunity to offer that aid when denizens of the Chaos Scar swarm the strange sky vessel.

If you're not playing a Chaos Scar campaign, you can use this adventure in any wilderness area.

Background

The human wizard named Bolios Whittish commands a strange flying fortress carved from the head of an enormous statue and fortified with a crownlike tower. *The Head in the Clouds* serves as Bolios's home and means of travel. Bolios has dedicated his life to the study of elemental spirits and the Elemental

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Chaos. He discovered the head in his quest for knowledge and christened it *The Head in the Clouds*.

Bolios found the massive head (possibly from an immense statue) floating above a desert near a weak point in the border between planes. He discovered that the stone was imbued with elemental spirits that made it weightless. With the aid of some desert-dwelling dwarves, Bolios strengthened the bonds on the beings and built towers atop it, creating a flying fortress (which he insists on calling his "ship") from which he could explore the world.

After hearing about the Chaos Scar, Bolios traveled to the area in the hope of learning more about it. For a few days he made distant observations from high in the clouds. Recently, he realized that his tower is sinking and being pulled farther into the Scar. Well aware of the possible danger, Bolios has been trying to discover the cause of the pull and fight against it. By the time he drifts down out of the clouds and spots the heroes, Bolios is desperate.

If you'd like to give the adventure a longer build-up, let the characters notice something ominous in the sky. It's just a speck at first, but eventually it draws close enough that they can recognize it as something that doesn't belong in the sky. Depending on how much lead time you have and how much mystery you want to build around it, this might take a few hours, a few days, or even a week or more. Allowing the characters to see the head as nothing more than a smudge against the distant clouds for several days should spark their curiosity.

When the distant object is first spotted, there will be no reliable information on it but plenty of conjecture. If the characters are in a town or settlement of any size, such as Restwell Keep, this will be the number one topic of conversation. (For a longer trek, characters might even spot the head while they're at Fallcrest and track Bolios's journey toward the Scar, out of curiosity over what the object is.) Once the citadel's shape becomes recognizable, the suppositions will only increase. Some people will hail it as a sign from the gods, others as a sign from devils; some will consider it a good omen, others a sure signal that the apocalypse is near. Those who favor more mundane explanations probably assume that it's the home of flying raiders coming to attack and loot the village. All sorts of plans and proposals will be put forward ranging from scattering and hiding in the hills to imploring the spirits of the sky for intercession to organizing a scouting/diplomatic party to get a closer look. If the latter happens, the characters should be included in (or at least invited to join) the official contingent sent to investigate the intruder. If the characters are the ones to make this suggestion, so much the better.

For further suggestions on how to build up the head's mystery, see the online "November Adventure Hooks" article.

Adventure Synopsis

Bolios begs the heroes for aid as he drifts inexorably forward and down. If the characters have some means of getting aboard while he's airborne, they can try to help Bolios counter the pull toward a distant cliff where minotaurs are performing a ritual. This effort is doomed to failure, however; the Head will crash to the ground well before it reaches the minotaurs. Unfortunately, the strange and unique intruder draws the attention of other inhabitants of the Chaos Scar. Before long, the thwarted minotaurs arrive to claim the prize they had hoped to pry from the clouds. If that isn't enough trouble, the bindings on the elemental beings that power the ship also unravel, presenting another threat that the heroes and Bolios must face. If the characters can keep Bolios alive, he rewards them handsomely. If they don't, the heroes could attempt to claim *The Head in the Clouds* for themselves, assuming they can capture and bind the elementals necessary to power it.

Getting the Characters Involved

When the adventure starts, the characters are assumed to be camping or traveling in the Chaos Scar area. Here are a couple of story hooks to use if the opening scene you chose doesn't engage the players and their characters.

Hook: WANTED

When Bolios tells the characters who he is, at least one of the adventurers remembers that someone called "Bolios the Elementalist" is wanted in a town the heroes left recently. A noble is offering a reward of 200 gp for the capture and return of Bolios and 1,000 gp for the safe return of a stolen book describing the Elemental Chaos, *Azael's Elemental Travels*. (Ideally, you've planned ahead and actually planted this information the last time the characters passed through a town.)

Quest: 350 XP for capturing Bolios and returning him to the noble. Unfortunately, Bolios dropped the book into a swamp because, as he says, "It was nonsense! Azael clearly knew nothing of the Elemental Chaos."

Hook: I Know that Face

The face of the statue is familiar to one of the adventurers as a depiction of a primordial, a dead deity, an ancient king, or some other individual of importance. The character might have seen it depicted on an ancient treasure map, carved into a wall associated with an important legend, embossed on the armor of a hated foe, stamped on an ancient coin, or used as a clue to something or someone the character is seeking. They may not know who the face represents, but he must have been important to have his image immortalized this way. If you like, a character might recognize the head as a legendary figure from your campaign with a DC 24 History skill check (use Religion or Arcana if those are more appropriate, but only one).

In most cases, however, if the adventurers want to find out where *The Head in the Clouds* came from, they'll need to help Bolios. He's not going to chat idly with strangers about the history and origin of the Head while he's scrambling to save it, but he'll be happy to show it off to anyone who helps him.

Quest: 350 XP for keeping Bolios alive through the encounters so that he can tell the character what he or she wants to know.

Bolios Whittish

Bolios Whittish is a rotund man of about 60 with white hair and a ruddy face in need of a shave. Bolios is outgoing, but unless the topic of conversation aligns with his interests (elemental magic, elemental creatures, the Elemental Chaos, and his ship, *The Head in the Clouds*) he swiftly becomes distracted by his own thoughts and activities.

Bolios came to the Chaos Scar to observe what elemental creatures live there and to see if he might find evidence that the evil that created the Scar has an elemental origin. He can't think of what life would be like without *The Head in the Clouds*, so he's not willing to give it up unless he has no hope of saving it.

Bolios Whittish	**Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 300
HP 73; **Bloodied** 36	**Initiative** +3
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	**Perception** +5
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Quake Staff** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1; +12 vs. AC (one creature)	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.	
✲ **Volcanic Blast** (fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (targets in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). Bolios slides the target 1 square.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Skills Arcana +11, Nature +10	
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+5)	
Con 9 (+2) **Int** 17 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+5)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment robes, staff	

Bolios will agree to grant the heroes a reward if they ask for it, and he gives it freely if they don't. See "Treasure" for a description of what Bolios can offer and what the heroes might claim if Bolios is dead.

Use Bolios to aid the characters in battle. The encounters in this adventure assume his inclusion, so if you decide not to use Bolios, the encounters are more difficult.

Running this Adventure

The encounters in this adventure can be run in many ways. How you organize the encounters depends on the actions of the characters.

During the opening scene, the characters might find a way to board *The Head in the Clouds*. If so, they meet Bolios and can see the magic circles that power his vessel. In this case, the adventurers' efforts to slow the ship unravel the circles and crash the ship (causing 2d10 damage and knocking the characters prone). Encounter 2 then starts as the elementals break free, followed by the ettins arriving for Encounter 1, and finally the minotaurs arrive for Encounter 3.

If the characters can't make it up to *The Head in the Clouds*, they won't be able to keep up with it as it is blown over some very broken terrain of the Scar. Instead, when they arrive at the crash site, the ettins are already on the scene, provoking Encounter 1. While dealing with them, the characters can hear Bolios chanting (he's trying to contain the elemental beings). The characters can thereafter enter the enormous head and help Bolios deal with the escaped elementals in Encounter 2. The minotaurs arrive soon after for Encounter 3.

Whichever way you run the encounters, consider allowing one encounter to run up into the next with no short rest available to the characters. These encounters will be more fun if the players need to manage threats coming hard on their heels from different directions. If things aren't going well, you can delay an encounter to allow a short or long rest. Perhaps Bolios rummages among his things and finds a scroll that raises a temporary wall of ice to block the monsters and give the group a respite. It's up to you—but the more frantic the pace, the better.

Treasure

Bolios Whittish is willing to part with a great deal of his wealth if the characters can get him out of the Chaos Scar alive. He's willing to grant them the following:

- *bracers of defense* (level 7)
- +3 *magic dagger*
- 1,000 gp
- two *potions of healing*

Bracers of Defense **Level 7+ Uncommon**

These enchanted armbands can be activated to reduce the damage you take from a single attack.

Item Slot: Arms **2,600 gp**

Power (Daily): Immediate Interrupt. *Trigger:* You are hit by a melee attack. *Effect:* Reduce the damage dealt to you by the attack by 10.

If Bolios is killed, the heroes can find the following additional funds among his things:

- two 500 gp sapphires
- a silver coffer worth 200 gp filled with 300 gp of mixed coinage
- +2 *magic wand*

Lastly, the minotaur magi carry the following treasure among them:

- Three 200 gp rubies
- leather satchels filled with a total of 800 gp of mixed coinage

Opening Scene

While the heroes are traveling or camped in the Chaos Scar, a howling wind kicks up all around and persists for a day. At some point during the day, they receive a strange greeting (alter the following text to suit the situation if you've changed it):

The strange weather suddenly worsens, and heavy hail slams painfully into your heads and shoulders. It takes a moment to realize it, but the "hail" rings loudly off your gear and golden circles pelt the ground around you. Dozens of gold coins are falling from the sky! When you look up, you see their source.

An enormous stone head drifts through the air about 200 feet above you. As you watch, it sinks slightly lower, and you see that a fortified tower has been built upon its top like a crown. An elderly human man is leaning out of the head's gaping mouth and waving to you. He seems to be shouting something, but it's hard to hear him over the howling wind.

You can make Bolios as difficult or as easy to hear as you like. Bolios hopes to communicate his need for help to the characters. He doesn't know who they are, but they're bound to be better than the minotaurs he can see from his high vantage. He hopes the adventurers have some means of helping him stop his ship, and he's willing to offer wealth (beyond the 78 gp he threw to the ground) and magic if the characters help him retain his flying home.

Bolios can't control his ship, but he'll do what he can to get the characters aboard. Unfortunately, that amounts to tying off a 50-foot length of rope and throwing it down. If the heroes board his ship, he eagerly greets them and shows them to the magic circles he hopes to use to arrest *The Head in the Clouds*. If they can't get aboard, Bolios begs them to follow him and heads inside to work on the circles. Either way, the work on the magic circles causes the minotaurs' ritual to fail and the floating head to crash, dragging its neck across the ground for several hundred feet before it finally stops.

The Head in the Clouds

The Head in the Clouds is crafted from the massive severed head of a statue with a crownlike tower built atop it. The head is about 100 feet tall from its chin to its top and 80 feet wide (slightly larger than George Washington's head in Mount Rushmore or roughly five times the size of the head of the Statue of Liberty). In addition to this, the head wears a "crown"—a fortified tower of two levels, each about 15 feet tall. The head looks like an angry, bearded human face, but the artistic license taken with the shapes could mean it was meant to depict an individual of another race or even some godlike or primordial being.

The Head: The face of the statue has openings for the mouth, eyes, and nostrils. The mouth opens into a "cave" carved out of the interior of the head. This cave has a source of water in it that remains forever full (at least until the elemental creatures escape in Encounter 2). The cave also contains a set of rough stairs that steeply round the back of the interior of the head until they reach the second cave level.

The second cave chamber in the head is at the level of the eyes, roughly 50 feet above the lower chamber. Near the stairs, the dwarves broke through the wall and built a stairwell to gain entrance to the tower above it. Someone in this level of the head can look out of the eye holes, but only a creature of Small or smaller size can squeeze through them. Small holes are also in the wall below the eyes and are narrow channels leading to the nostrils. A blackened spot on the floor sheltered by a fire-darkened overhang is between the nostril channel holes. The charred floor shows the position where a fire could be built to force smoke out through the nostrils. In one corner of the chamber, rusted chains are attached to the wall. In its distant past, the chains kept creatures in place so that the statue could weep warm blood from its eyes.

The Tower: Bolios's tower consists of two levels. Originally he had the dwarves build a spacious lower floor for entertaining guests while his chambers for study and living were upstairs. Bolios has never had any guests, however, and he jettisoned much of the furniture on the first floor when he discovered that the head was sinking, before he realized the minotaurs' ritual was to blame.

The first floor contains a glowing, golden glyph that is part of how *The Head in the Clouds* remains lighter than air. Bolios has strewn about many scrolls and books from a bookshelf on this floor in his desperate search for some way to thwart the distant minotaurs.

The second floor is a jumble of Bolios's studies and spartan living quarters. The red glyphs help to give *The Head in the Clouds* the power to move, but Bolios is not certain exactly how or why ("The fire spirits trapped within represent the animism inherent in all motion, even the planes. It's elementary!"). A blue glyph on the floor represents the means by which the ship can be piloted. If one creature is within the circle, that creature can see outside the head as if looking out its eyes and thereby direct the vessel. It can be moved 10 squares once per turn as a move action.

Concluding the Adventure

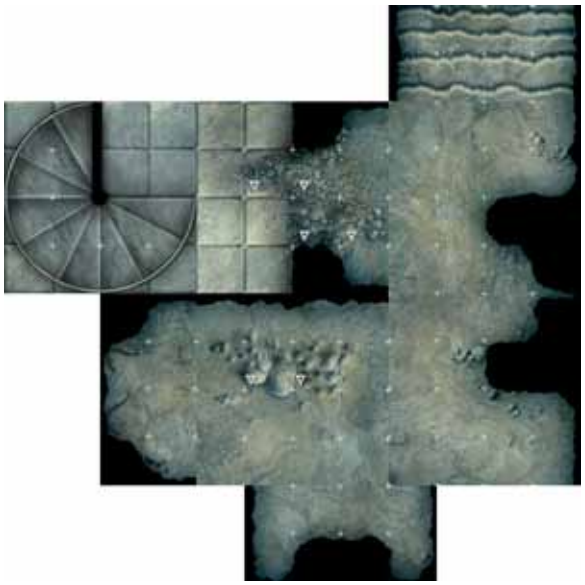
If Bolios survives, he's grateful to the adventurers and begs them to help get him and his library out of the Chaos Scar. The minotaurs' bodies might reveal some clue as to why they wanted *The Head in the Clouds*, but why that is and what adventures it might lead the characters to is up to you.

Although Bolios strengthened the bonds on the elementals in his ship, he doesn't know how to recapture them or bond new elemental creatures. Once he has had time to do some research with his books, he'll be happy to hire the characters to seek and capture some elementals to repower *The Head in the Clouds* (and probably to chase out whatever creatures inevitably move into the head after Bolios and the characters strip it of valuables and leave the Scar). As payment for these deeds, Bolios gives the characters the rest of his wealth and takes them wherever they wish to go, plus he offers to give them another free ride at a later date.

If Bolios didn't survive, the heroes might be able to research the means of re-powering the head themselves from Bolios's library, but they must either get the books and scrolls out of the Chaos Scar, or defend *The Head in the Clouds* from other curious Scar denizens. Either way, the characters must find new elementals and then reclaim the head from those who have it when they return—surely that's a quest worthy of the reward of a flying fortress!

Mouth Level

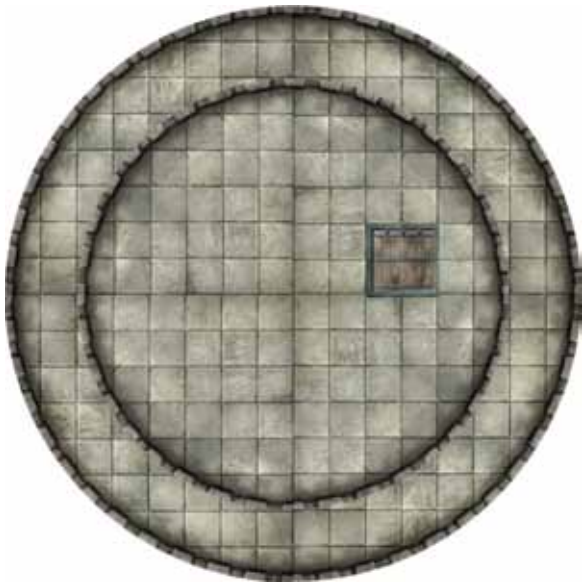
Eye Level



Tower First Floor

Tower Second Floor

Tower Roof



Encounter 1: Offerings to a God?

Encounter Level 9 (2,100 XP)
This encounter pits the heroes against a band of curious ettins.

Setup

4 ettin thugs (T)
1 ettin wrath chanter (W)

The crash of *The Head in the Clouds* lands it near an ettin hunting party. The enormous humanoids watched its arrival from hiding and see its landing near them as the potential blessing of a god. As soon as it stops moving, they run up and hurl their recent kills (the bodies of some hobgoblins) into the "god's" mouth in the hopes of sating its hunger and making it happy.

When the encounter begins, the ettins are wondering what to do next. Each ettin keeps one head looking to the sky (there must be another head coming!) while the other looks to the god and talks to the other ettins about what to do (in Giant). The ettin wrath chanter is the only one brave enough to speak to the god, but it's also the most suspicious of the nature of the thing from the sky. The wrath chanter wants to see some godly power or it's going to head in and claim the place for itself.

If the heroes arrive by chasing down *The Head in the Clouds*, they crest a nearby hill and see the ettins surrounding the head while Bolios can be heard chanting a binding ritual within it. Allow the heroes to decide how they approach the ettins, but if they take too long, the ettins enter to find the source of the noise.

If the adventurers hitched a ride on the head, they can hear the low voices of the ettins grumbling outside when they pick themselves up after the crash.

Deceiving the Ettins Skill Challenge (1,750 XP)

An Insight or Religion check (DC 16) can determine why the ettins are behaving as they are. If a character knows the Giant language, the things the ettins are saying also reveals their religious take on the situation. If the characters decide to take advantage of the situation and manipulate the ettins by playing god, run this encounter as a skill challenge with a complexity of 5 (12 successes before 3 failures). Allow the players to improvise skill checks and actions. Bluff, Intimidate, Religion, and Sense Motive should be primary skills. Note that without access to the Giant language, certain skill checks automatically result in a failure. Certain actions should result in successes as well. If the heroes make the bodies of the hobgoblins disappear, for instance, the ettins assume they were eaten and believe more strongly in the "god's" power.

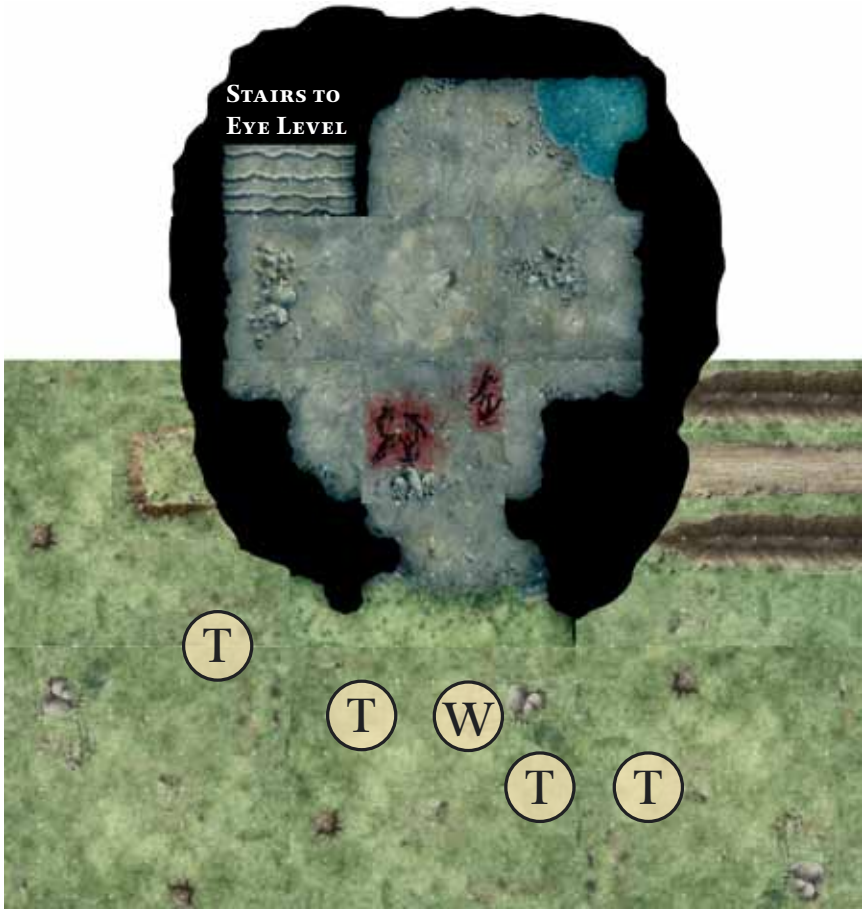
4 Ettin Thugs (T)	**Level 8 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (giant)	XP 350
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55	**Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19	**Perception** +11
Speed 6	
Traits	
Double Actions	
The ettin makes two initiative checks and takes a full turn on each initiative result. The ettin can take two immediate actions per round but only one between one turn and the next.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Smash** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d12 + 3 damage.	
Move Actions	
⸸ **Kick** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The ettin pushes the target up to 2 squares. The ettin then moves up to half its speed.	
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+6)	
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+3)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	

Ettin Wrath Chanter (W)	Level 8 Elite Controller (Leader)
Large natural humanoid (giant)	XP 700
HP 184; **Bloodied** 92	**Initiative** +5
AC 22, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20	**Perception** +11
Speed 6	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
☼ **Rage Song ✦ Aura** 5	
Enemies take a –2 penalty to attack rolls but gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls while in the aura. Allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls while in the aura.	
Double Actions	
The ettin makes two initiative checks and takes a full turn on each initiative result. The ettin can take two immediate actions per round but only one between one turn and the next.	
Dual Brain	
At the end of its turn, the ettin automatically ends any dazing, stunning, or charm effect on itself.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Smash** (weapon) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Invoke Fury ✦ At-Will	
Effect: Close burst 5 (one enemy in the burst). The target must use a free action to charge or make a basic attack against a target of the ettin's choice. The movement for this charge does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+6)	
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 17 (+7)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Language** Giant	

Tactics

The tactics of the ettins depends a lot on the behavior of the characters. If the characters attack the ettins from outside *The Head in the Clouds*, the ettins take refuge within it and hurl attacks out of the mouth. When this tactic turns foul (such as when an area power hits many of them), they run up to the level of the eyes and then to the first level of the tower where they lie in wait for the heroes (and eat Bolios if the characters are too slow).

If the adventurers attack from within *The Head in the Clouds*, the ettin wrath chanter uses *invoke fury* from range while the ettin thugs close into melee and attempt to *kick* opponents closer to the wrath chanter.



Features of the Area

Attacking from The Head in the Clouds: A creature can make attacks out of the eyes of the head, but the eyes are about 60 feet above the ground. Similarly, creatures within the tower are 100 feet, 115 feet, or 130 feet above the ground. Regardless of where the creatures are in the head or the tower, targets within 20 feet of the head have total cover. Only creatures leaning over the edge of roof of the first level of the tower can get a clear shot at targets within 20 feet of the side of the head.

Climbing The Head in the Clouds: A creature can climb the head with a DC 15 Athletics check. Climbing the side of the tower requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

Encounter 2: Too Little, Too Late

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

After a futile effort to contain the elementals, the heroes must defeat them in battle.

Setup

1 flame snake (S)
1 frost hawk (F)
3 geonids (G)
1 shardstorm vortex (V)

Bolios begs the characters to help him contain the elementals trapped in the glyphs. They are unraveling simultaneously and each glyph requires a creature standing on it to succeed in three successive DC 15 Arcana checks. (If Bolios is dead, a character with the Arcana skill can surmise this is the case as the glyphs flash and sputter.) Characters can aid one another, but their efforts are doomed. Bolios doesn't know that the pool in the mouth cave serves as another point of elemental containment—a natural one that Bolios missed in his effort to turn the head into his flying fortress.

Allow the characters to make an effort to contain the elementals, but when it fails, the encounter begins. The elementals appear as indicated on the tactical map. Any creature except an elemental within a glyph area when the encounter begins is pushed out and stunned until the end of its next turn. Roll initiative for all the creatures normally (no surprise round).

Flame Snake (S) — **Level 9 Artillery**
Medium elemental beast (fire, reptile) — XP 400

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37 — **Initiative** +9
AC 23, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20 — **Perception** +12
Speed 6
Resist 20 fire

Standard Actions

Bite (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage plus 1d6 fire damage.

Spit Fire (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Str 11 (+4)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 2 (0)	**Cha** 10 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** –

Frost Hawk (F) — **Level 7 Skirmisher**
Small elemental beast (cold) — XP 300

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 — **Initiative** +9
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19 — **Perception** +6
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 8

Traits

Shattering Strike
A frost hawk's melee attacks deal 2d6 extra cold damage against a slowed creature.

Standard Actions

Ice Talons (cold) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage plus 1d6 cold damage.

Flyby Attack ✦ **At-Will**
The frost hawk flies 8 squares and makes an *ice talons* attack at any point during that movement. The frost hawk doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target.

Freezing Screech (cold) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8 + 5 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Str 14 (+5)	**Dex** 19 (+7)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1)	**Cha** 8 (+2)

Alignment unaligned — **Languages** –

3 Geonids (G) — **Level 6 Lurker**
Large elemental magical beast (earth) — XP 250

HP 56; **Bloodied** 28 — **Initiative** +10
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 — **Perception** +11
Immune disease, petrification, poison
Speed 4

Traits

Shell Form
A geonid with its shell closed resembles a boulder. A creature can recognize the geonid as a beast by succeeding on a DC 28 Perception check.

Standard Actions

Tentacle ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.

Capturing Grab ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.
Effect: The geonid makes one more attack against the same target. If both attacks hit, the geonid grabs the target.

Shell Slam ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in the blast); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target falls prone.
Effect: The geonid closes its shell. While the geonid's shell is closed, its speed is 0, it gains a +5 bonus to all defenses, and it does not have line of effect to any creature other than a creature it has grabbed. The geonid slides a creature it has grabbed into its space. The grabbed creature has line of sight and line of effect only to the geonid. The geonid does not gain its bonus to defenses against the grabbed creature. If the grabbed creature escapes, it appears in a space adjacent to the geonid. The geonid can open its shell as a minor action.

Skills Stealth +11

Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 6 (+1)	**Cha** 9 (+2)

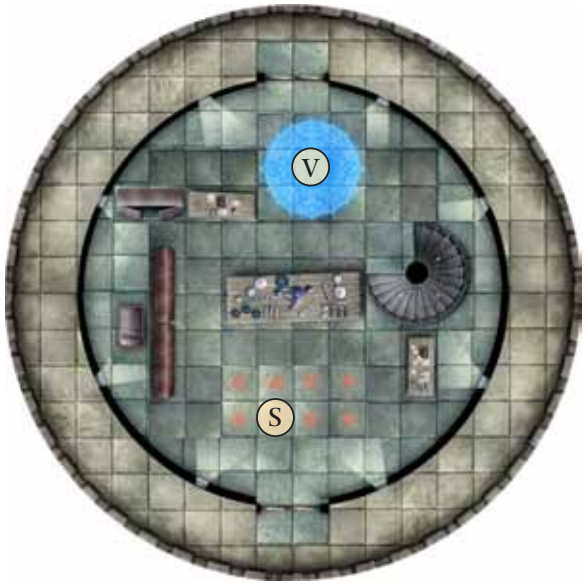
Alignment unaligned — **Languages** Primordial

Shardstorm Vortex (V)	**Level 7 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth)	XP 300
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40	**Initiative** +9
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19	**Perception** +6
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 0, fly 8 (hover)	
Traits	
☼ **Sandblast ✦ Aura 1**	
Each enemy in the aura takes a -2 penalty to all defenses.	
Standard Actions	
ⓘ **Abrasive Slam ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage.	
✧ **Whirling Blast ✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Effect: The shardstorm vortex shifts 4 squares and makes an attack.	
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d8 + 3 damage, and the vortex pushes the target 1 square.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Str 10 (+3) / Dex 19 (+7) / Wis 16 (+6)	
Con 16 (+6) / Int 5 (0) / Cha 6 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned / Languages Primordial	

Mouth Level

Tower First Floor

Tower Second Floor



Tactics

If Bolios lives, he tries to flee from the elementals by exiting the tower. The elementals try to prevent this, but if they can't, all but the geonids can squeeze through to attack him.

The elementals attack relentlessly, but they focus their rage on Bolios when possible. Assuming no one is on the head levels below the tower, the frost hawk uses the first 2 rounds of combat to fly up to the first floor of the tower. The geonids appear touching the golden glyph with shells closed but attack on their initiatives. They attempt to hold heroes in the glyph area with their grab attacks. The shardstorm vortex uses *whirling blast* at its first opportunity while the flame snake blasts away from a distance, climbing up a bookcase if necessary to get away from melee attackers.

Features of the Area

Bookcases: A DC 5 Athletics check allows a creature to climb a bookcase. A bookcase might be pushed over onto the 2-by-4-square area adjacent to it. If so, the pusher makes a Strength +2 attack at creatures in the area. On a hit, the creature takes 1d8 + Strength modifier damage and falls prone. On a miss, the creature slides to the nearest open space.

Magic Glyphs: Any non-elemental creature that ends its turn in a square of a glyph suffers the following:

Blue Glyph—1d6 cold damage, and the creature is slowed (save ends).

Red Glyph—2d8 fire damage.

Golden Glyph—1d8 damage, and a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

Encounter 3: Besieged by Demons

Encounter Level 10 (2,850 XP)

The characters are besieged when the minotaurs finally arrive to claim their prize.

Setup

3 neldrazu (N)
3 minotaur magi (M)
1 demonic savage minotaur (D)

The minotaurs who performed the ritual to draw down *The Head in the Clouds* have come to claim it. They're not pleased to have been forced to run across the Chaos Scar, and they'll be even less happy when they learn the head has lost the power of flight. Figuring that some other denizens of the Scar might try to claim their prize, they've sent ahead some demonic servants to clear the field of opposition.

The neldrazu approach *The Head in the Clouds* cautiously, keeping in the low spots of the rolling hills and moving behind the cover of tumbled boulders and brush. They attempt to approach from a side not watched by any visible heroes. Allow any character keeping watch from the top of the tower a Perception check opposed by the neldrazu's Stealth checks. Otherwise, the neldrazu arrive at the base of the tower undetected. One then stealthily enters the mouth while the other two climb the side of *The Head in the Clouds* and try to enter through the doors or hatch in the tower. Combat begins when the heroes notice the demons or when they attack with surprise.

The minotaurs time their arrival for 2 rounds after they detect signs that the neldrazu have attacked. The minotaur magi have one of their demonic brethren with them, chained, blinded, and muzzled. Thus their first action upon their arrival is to unleash the demonic savage minotaur.

3 Neldrazu (N) **Level 8 Lurker**
Large elemental humanoid (demon) XP 350

HP 71; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +13
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19 **Perception** +7
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter) Darkvision
Speed 8, climb 6 (spider climb)

Standard Actions

Slashing Claw ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.

Flaying Claws ✦ At-Will
Requirement: Only one enemy is within 5 squares of the neldrazu.
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 4d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Move Actions

Abduct (teleportation) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Melee 2 (one enemy); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Effect: The neldrazu teleports the target 10 squares, and the neldrazu teleports to a space adjacent to the target.
Miss: The neldrazu teleports 10 squares.

Triggered Actions

Bloodied Abduction (teleportation) **✦ Encounter**
Trigger: The neldrazu is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): The neldrazu teleports an enemy adjacent to it 5 squares, and the neldrazu teleports to a space adjacent to that enemy.

Skills Stealth +14

Str 15 (+6)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7)	**Int** 7 (+2)	**Cha** 11 (+4)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal

3 Minotaur Magi (M) **Level 9 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 400

HP 96; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +5
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 23 **Perception** +12
Speed 6

Traits

Unleash the Beast Within ✦ Aura 3
Any ally that starts its turn in the aura gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls on attacks made as part of charges until the end of that ally's turn.

Standard Actions

Glaive ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 10 damage, and the magus slides the target 2 squares.
Miss: The magus slides the target 1 square.

Baphomet's Rage (charm, psychic) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +12 vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target uses a free action to charge a creature of the magus's choosing.

Crimson Bolt (fire, lightning) **✦ Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 5 lightning damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage and cannot shift (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

Goring Fling ✦ At-Will
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the magus deals damage to the magus.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (the triggering enemy); +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the magus pushes the target up to 3 squares.

Skills Bluff +14, Insight +12

Str 18 (+8)	**Dex** 12 (+5)	**Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 15 (+6)	**Cha** 20 (+9)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Demonic Savage Minotaur (D)	Level 11 Brute
Large natural humanoid	XP 600
HP 140; **Bloodied** 70	**Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20	**Perception** +7
Speed 8	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC. If the minotaur targets only one creature, it can make this attack twice against that creature.	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the minotaur grabs the target (escape DC 19) if it has fewer than two creatures grabbed.	
⸸ **Impale ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the minotaur); +14 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 5d8 + 13 damage. The target falls prone and is no longer grabbed by the minotaur.	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Goring Assault ✦ At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy within 10 squares of the minotaur hits it with a ranged or area attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The minotaur charges the triggering enemy.	
Str 22 (+11)	**Dex** 16 (+8)	**Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	**Int** 5 (+2)	**Cha** 7 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal, Common	

Tactics

The neldrazu want to separate the heroes, so they attempt to engage them in melee and then teleport outside the tower through the arrow slits. As a particularly fiendish trick, a neldrazu might abduct a character and teleport down the side of the head where it clings to the side. This puts a character in range of the crimson bolts of the minotaur magi and at risk of falling.

The minotaur magi prefer to stay out of melee. If they must, they enter *The Head in the Clouds* or climb its side to target a character.

The demonic savage minotaur runs up through the interior of the head and the tower to engage the first enemy it sees.

Features of the Area

Attacking from The Head in the Clouds: A creature can make attacks out of the eyes of the head, but the eyes are about 60 feet above the ground. Similarly, creatures within the tower are 100 feet, 115 feet, or 130 feet above the ground. Regardless of where the creatures are in the head or the tower, targets within 20 feet of the head have total cover. Only creatures leaning over the edge of roof of the first level of the tower can get a clear shot at targets within 20 feet of the side of the head.

Climbing The Head in the Clouds: A creature can climb the head with a DC 15 Athletics check. Climbing the side of the tower requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

Bookcases: A DC 5 Athletics check allows a creature to climb a bookcase. A bookcase might be pushed over onto the 2-by-4-square area adjacent to it. If so, the pusher makes a Strength +2 attack at creatures in the area. On a hit, the creature takes 1d8 + Strength modifier damage and falls prone. On a miss, the creature slides to the nearest open space.

Magic Glyphs: Any non-elemental creature that ends its turn in a square of a glyph suffers the following:

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Red Glyph—2d8 fire damage.

Golden Glyph—1d8 damage, and a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

About the Author

Matt Sernett is a writer and game designer for Wizards of the Coast who splits his time between Dungeons & Dragons® and Magic: The Gathering®. Recent credits include *Player's Handbook Races: Tieflings*, *The Plane Above: Secrets of the Astral Sea*, and *Magic the Gathering: Zendikar*. When he's not making monsters or building worlds, he's watching bad fantasy movies you don't realize exist and shouldn't bother to learn about.

Explore Taer Lian Doresh:

Villains and Vendettas

By Jeff LaSala

illustration by Craig J. Spearing

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"I have performed for the council of the Silver Tree, the Queen of Dusk, and all Seven Brothers of Night. I have recited epics for lordly centaurs and lady satyrs, cried eulogies for hags and sang dirges for cyclops in the realms below. But nothing would give me greater honor, esteemed sirs, than the opportunity to make sausage with your guts. Hah-HAH!"

The Fortress of Fading Dreams is more than a dreaded fixture on the mainland of the Lhazaar Principalities—more than a prison where explorers and lost hunters can meet a fate worse than death. It is a true bastion of evil and the launching point of schemes that threaten much more than the mortal lives it touches. Having been exiled in Dal Quor for tens of thousands of years—themselves victims of its horrors—Taer Lian Doresh only recently has had a taste of the waking world again. Once, long ago, the fey of the Spire of Dreams dallied in Eberron's forests and upon its shores. Their actions were driven by caprice, scholarly interest, or benevolence. But now their attention is focused on the directive of its liege: The world must suffer as they did.

It is unlikely that Shan Lian Doresh, the Lord of the Fading Dream, will open his gates and march out his soldiers in military force. For now, it benefits him to keep the feyspire beyond the awareness of his enemies. It is no longer his style or wish to conquer lands or claim political power. Countless years in the Region of Dreams have given the eladrin lord great patience and greater power. With the force of his will and the assistance of his subjects—the *wyrds*, who are fey transformed into nightmarish reflections of their former selves—he can study the horrors dreamed up by mortals and turn them in revolt.

He needs only to reach out to the world beyond, three plots at a time.

MARROT THE FOOL

One of Shan Doresh's oldest friends is the bard known as Marrot the Fool. He became a court jester when the Spire of Dreams was first shaped in the beauteous wilds of Thelanis, and he has accompanied Shan Doresh for so long that he is the only companion who remembers the eladrin lord's real name. Before the Age of Giants, this gnome and his riotous clan were minstrels and entertainers across the breadth of the Feywild. They performed for eladrin courts and satyr glades alike; even for dumbstruck humans when the planes became coterminous. When the giants in Xen'drik seized the feyspire Shae Tirias, Marrot ended his ramblings and swore a solemn allegiance to Shan Doresh. The charismatic gnome journeyed with Shan Doresh to help him persuade the other lords of Thelanis to unite against the giants of Eberron. The other eladrin chose to focus on their defenses instead, leaving the spire of Shae Doresh to fight alone. Marrot's fate was sealed when he gave his loyalty to Shan Doresh, for he has been tortured and driven by the nightmares of Dal Quor like all the rest. In the depths of their anguish, it was Marrot the Fool who could tease a smile out of the suffering fey.

Today, Marrot has become a freakish parody of himself. He wears a mask that resembles his original face which gives him the mirthful and craggy appearance of a grandfatherly gnome. His real face beneath is the same visage, but it is carved like that of a wooden puppet. In his hand he carries a mock scepter that serves as a symbol of his station and as a wand for battle. Its mocking head changes on Marrot's whim to assume his own countenance or that of a chosen enemy.

Marrot is both mystery and mountebank. He performs tricks that amuse, twist, and suspend disbelief for a people already infused with magic. He makes the mundane appear supernatural and the fantastical appear prosaic. Before exile to Dal Quor, Marrot appeared across the world in children's stories and faerie tales as a famous clown: a heroic if downtrodden fool who swindled dragons, pranked demons, and immolated kings.

Stage Combat

To Marrot, combat is delicious performance art. Battle with an enemy is one scene in the first act of a play. Of course, he would rather watch than participate in a bloody fray, but when he is forced into violence, he assumes the role of villain with wit and panache. He is a master of arcane puppetry, mimicry, and ventriloquism, and he puts these talents to good effect in a fight.

Using *deadly puppetry*, he briefly controls the actions of choice opponents using their powers against each other. Whenever he does this, the head of his scepter reshapes itself to resemble the victim of this savage puppetry, adding mockery to mayhem. The *mesmeric pattern* of his jester's costume and *persistent pratfall* makes it easier for him to deal with those who engage him in melee, and *gruesome guffaw* can make his enemies laugh so hard they spit out their own blood. Marrot's spirit is bound to the scepter he carries; *the last laugh* ensures that he can "die" dramatically and survive for a proper denouement another day.

Marrot's Coterie

When true violence is absolutely necessary, Marrot relies on the presence of some of his younger kin and a trio of zombie ragers raised from the bodies of his last victims and dressed, of course, like clowns. In addition, he carries an hourglass at all times. If he dashes it to the floor, two sand golems rise from the swirl of fine grains.

Level 18 Encounter (XP 10,800)

- ✦ Marrot the Fool (level 20 elite lurker)
- ✦ 4 Harlequinade gnomes (level 8 skirmisher, *Dungeon* 181)
- ✦ 2 sand golems (level 15 skirmisher, *Dragon* 367)
- ✦ 4 zombie ragers (level 16 minion brute, *Tomb of Horrors*)

Hook: Surely You Jest

Marrot attends, amuses, and advises Shan Doresh as needed, but he also enacts many independent schemes of his own. Above all, he directs the caravans of the Harlequinade as a puppetmaster from afar, gathering the *philters of the Fading Dream* from the Shrouded Sages and supplying them to his roving clan. Any plot involving these twisted gnomes ultimately ties back to Marrot. If any of his caravans are destroyed by meddling heroes, he desires from them an introduction! Marrot arranges such a meeting through their dreams, intending to lure them back to Taer Lian Doresh so they can meet face to face.

Marrot has one weakness. He loves well-contrived stories and often features himself in the telling. As a result, tales about him and his adventures—real or imagined—have rippled through many cultures within Thelanis and across Eberron over the ages, evolving as they drift. If any such stories are offered to him, he pauses to listen.

Marrot the Fool — **Level 20 Elite Lurker**
Small fey humanoid — **XP 5,600**

HP 296; **Bloodied** 148 — **Initiative** +18
AC 34, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 34 — **Perception** +15
Speed 6; phasing — Low-light vision
Immune dazed, fear; **Resist** 5 psychic
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Mesmeric Pattern ✦ Aura** 3
Enemies within the aura are weakened.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Deadly Puppetry** (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +23 vs. Will
Hit: Marrot slides the target up to 4 squares, and then the target uses a basic attack or an at-will power against an ally. Both the attack and the targeted ally are chosen by Marrot.

Scepter Blast (force) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +23 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 7 force damage, and the target is pushed up to 2 squares and falls prone.

Minor Actions

Gruesome Guffaw (fear, necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +23 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target takes a -5 penalty to all defenses until the end of Marrot's next turn.

Move Actions

Dark Step (teleportation) ✦ **Encounter**
Effect: Marrot teleports up to 5 squares and gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of his next turn.

Triggered Actions

Fade Away (illusion) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: Marrot takes damage.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Marrot becomes invisible until after he hits or misses with an attack or until the end of his next turn.

Persistent Pratfall ✦ At-Will
Trigger: An enemy hits Marrot with a melee attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The triggering creature falls prone.

The Last Laugh
Trigger: Marrot drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); each creature takes 10 damage when Marrot's body becomes a statue of wood and papier-mâché, then explodes in a spray of laughter, blood, confetti, and deadly shards. His scepter teleports to a protected location within Taer Lian Doresh. Marrot is not destroyed. Unless his scepter is found and destroyed, Marrot reappears in 1d12 days within 1 square of the scepter.

Alignment evil — **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +22, Intimidate +23

Str 16 (+13)	**Dex** 18 (+14)	**Wis** 20 (+15)
Con 22 (+16)	**Int** 25 (+17)	**Cha** 26 (+18)

MOUNTING FEAR

Due west of Taer Lian Doresh and just beyond the edge of the forest rise the Hoarfrost Mountains and the Mror Holds. Lately, the dreams of the dwarves of Narathun have become troubled. Of all the Mrorian territories, Narathunhold lies closest to Taer Lian Doresh. It presides over the eastern rim of the dwarven realm and looks down upon the Whitepine Forest and the Lhazaar waters.

Shan Doresh has been whispering into the hearts of these geographic neighbors as they sleep, inspiring both greed and paranoia. Consequently, the clan lords have been having dreams they fear might be prophetic in nature—that the dwarves of Clan Toldorath and the Jhorash'tar orcs are planning a full-scale incursion against them. Not coincidentally, both the dwarves of Toldorathhold and the orcs of Jhorash'tar have been having unusual dreams as well.

Paranoia: Shan Doresh is using the Mror Holds as a test of his influence. If he can drive them to war with another clan, he intends to make his next move against the already splintered Lhazaar Principalities and then Karrnath. Heroes with ties to the Mror Holds might be called upon to investigate the troubling dreams. The dwarves of Clan Narathun are known as the best jewelers in the world, and many are convinced that their ages-old feud with Clan Toldorath is about to burst into open war. Priests of Onatar believe that there is an outside influence at work and would offer their favor—and a choice treasure or two from their vaults—to someone who unmasks the true enemy. A diplomatic mission to Toldorathhold might be one way, but there has also been talk of a treasure in the Whitepine Forest worth investigating.

AS THE CROWS FLY

In the days before Shae Doresh was rebuilt as a fortress of war, only a handful of scarecrows stood on the outskirts of the city to mark the dominion of the Lord of the Fading Dream. Unlike most scarecrows in the Feywild, they were more likely to warn off intruders than attack them and to act under the ghaele's peaceable laws and the orders of their masters.

Times have changed. When the fey armed themselves for war against the giants so long ago, the scarecrows were gathered from the surrounding forest and stored away, half-forgotten, in the cellars of the city. During the feyspire's long exile in Dal Quor, the straw-and-cloth constructs were infused with madness as well as unquiet hate—not so unlike the eladrin and other fey of the city—but also with willful desires uncommon to their kind. When Taer Lian Doresh settled onto Eberron's soil on the Day of Mourning, the scarecrows were removed from storage and mounted on posts in a ring around the feyspire to once again mark the domain of Shan Doresh.

Now the scarecrows are growing restless. They serve as sentinels as intended, attacking trespassers and other uninvited intruders. Yet the magic bonding them to their creators is unraveling. Not only are the hags who constructed them unable to reliably 'see' through their scarecrows' eyes when enemies approach, but the scarecrows are growing defiant, hostile, and even aggressive toward those welcomed by the fey. Some have harassed residents of the feyspire or gone missing altogether. When the scarecrows were first placed in Whitepine Forest, they numbered less than twenty. Now at least thirty exist . . . that are known of. If the hags aren't crafting new ones, who is? And why are they wearing pieces of armor from faraway lands? (For more on scarecrows, see "Ecology of the Scarecrow" in *Dungeon* 183.)

Ladyrook: The most powerful of the scarecrows is a "female" nicknamed Ladyrook who was constructed thousands of years ago by the night hag Santyriana. Not only is she the most cunning among them, but unknown to anyone in Taer Lian Doresh, she has also learned the secret to making more of her kind. In hidden hollows, she uses the clothing, armor, and the entrails of her victims to craft new scarecrows fully under her control. The bodies of these new constructs include some of the trappings and grisly parts from both local and not-so-local victims, giving rise to more questions.

Ladyrook has been sending a scarecrow called Mawkin on treks for choice components that range far beyond the casual reach of Taer Lian Doresh. Mawkin pops up in the crop fields of small villages and

FIGHTING THE SCARECROWS

Scarecrows encountered in or around the Fortress of Fading Dreams have the same statistics as those on page 168 of *Monster Manual 3*, but they also gain a *wyrd*'s benefits as described in the first "Explore Taer Lian Doresh" article (*Dungeon* #178).

Ladyrook is a scarecrow haunter several levels higher than those in *Monster Manual 3* (she can easily be scaled up by the DM or by using the Monster Builder tool). All of her newly created scarecrows begin as scarecrow shamblers. Her craft is improving, however: The next ones will be guardians and haunters. Mawkin is a scarecrow guardian.

As an early paragon tier adventure, characters might be asked by local justicars in the Lhazaar Principalities to investigate the recent murders plaguing the port towns around Mutiny Bay or Cliff's End. When the bloody trail leads them into the woods, they are ambushed by Mawkin and a number of newly made shamblers. Defeating the scarecrows will not end the threat. Ladyrook is sure to send more harvesters. Characters who know about such animate scarecrows will know that they're meant to stand watch on the edge of fey territory, raising the question of what these are doing traveling about the area. This mystery can lead the heroes back to Ladyrook and to Taer Lian Doresh.

Ladyrook is not content only to improve her own form. In time, she intends to lead an exodus of her 'children' away from the domain of Shan Doresh in search of a territory she can rule as her own. Because she is patient and subtle, the fey of Taer Lian Doresh haven't become so concerned that they've devoted resources to solving the mystery of their restless guardians. Characters on peaceable terms with the fey might be asked to investigate the matter.

hamlets around Whitepine Forest as far as Tantamar and Cliffscrape. There Mawkin has become a true menace to the peasantry by murdering seemingly at random and stealing one organ or body part at a time—a stomach here, a brain there—on Ladyrook's commands.

The wayward scarecrow doesn't wish to stop there. In Dal Quor, the errant dreams of mortals have seeded in Ladyrook the desire to transcend her straw-bound form and become something truly *living*. At the time of her creation, a noblewoman's heart was sewn into her body; now, a pair of eyeballs, a damsel's jawbone, and a scalp of lush human hair adorn her sack head. She eagerly awaits Mawkin's return and the latest prizes he will bring her.

THE KNIGHTS OF TERROR

Long ago, twelve knights of legend from every corner of Thelanis rode out to the Spire of Dreams to answer the call to war. When the other feyspires refused to join Shan Doresh's challenge against the giants, these eladrin warriors renounced their allegiances and forged a new oath: to serve the Lord of Dreams alone and to live or die in avenging the lost City of Song and Silence. Neither their great skill nor the armies of Shae Doresh were enough to win the fight, and five of these elite knights were slain in the battle. They were the fortunate ones.

The Titan King deceived all of them with his ritual of exile, and by the administrations of Dal Quor, the surviving seven knights were transformed into something both greater and lesser than the heroes they'd once been. Their courage begat hate, and their valor begat terror. They became the Knights of Terror, Shan Doresh's chief agents who serve as his hands and his sword in the Region of Dreams. With Taer Dian Loresh now rooted on Eberron's soil, they come and go from the fortress on quests to which the other fey are seldom privy. If Shan Doresh wishes to send a message, a warning, or a threat, he will often send one of his Knights to bear it. If he wishes to possess something, one or more will be dispatched to retrieve it. If something is to be destroyed, the Knights of Terror will see it done.

Each of the seven Knights of Terror embodies a primal fear of the mortal world. Wherever they go, inexplicable dread flows before them and lingers in their wake. At a glance, each appears to be a creature to which the term 'knight' can be applied only superficially. Each is armored, mounted, and mantled like a cavalier of myth, but they are clothed in the dream-stuff of Dal Quor. It drips from their very being and imparts itself upon each viewer. One might appear to be skewered with a thousand blades such that all who look upon him feel excruciating pain, while another inspires despair with the sorrow of her cadaverous form. Despite their appalling appearance, in action one can sometimes glimpse the noble eladrin beneath the veil, bright and fair as storybook elves but twisted and terrible in their wrath.

Knights of Remorse: The Knights' oath to Shan Doresh binds them completely to his service. They are not enslaved to his will and they do not always agree with him, but after all this time, they remain loyal. He is their commander, their lord, their spiritual father ... but now that their feyspire has returned to Eberron, they once again breathe the air of the waking world and find their desires uncertain.

From their liege, they have learned that the other feyspires of Thelanis are likewise stranded upon Khorvaire. Long before the misery of Dal Quor fell upon them, they served other lords and ladies of the Faerie Court, and their memory is long. When not carrying out quests for Shan Doresh, some of the Knights of Terror have begun to wander alone like lost pilgrims drawn toward the other feyspires out of curiosity and morbid fascination for the lives they left behind. What might their lives have been like had they not answered the call to war?

One of the Knights, for example, has ventured into Darguun and watched the siege of Shae Jordial from afar. The fear engendered by his presence caused discord within the goblin ranks—an unintentional boon for the City of Emerald Lights. Another Knight rode into the Karrnwood to see with her own eyes Taer Syraen, the Winter Citadel, and she slew any who discovered her presence. Shan Doresh does not know of these wanderings yet, and he would not approve. In the end, the Knights will remain true; they will not betray him or serve another master. But these ancient bonds linger in the depths of tortured minds and might yet be used against them. They simultaneously love and hate these memories, and their hate runs deep.

UNQUIET SPIRITS

The spirits who haunt the woods around Taer Lian Doresh are not a unified force. Most of them are wailing ghosts—intruders slain by blade, spell, or nightmare who now fill the night with their cries. Those who came to the Fortress seeking treasure or glory are typically evil, and they turn their fury on the living indiscriminately. Several who ventured to

the Fortress of Fading Dreams sought only to discover the source of their troubles or destroy the evil they believed laired within the fortress. When slain by the vindictive fey, their restless spirits fled but they could not go far. These banshees gather in the hollows of Whitepine Forest and drift on the outskirts of the feyspire, where they attempt to frighten away the foolish and ignorant. Without exception, these ghosts are hideous to behold. Their bodies reveal not the wounds that killed them but instead their greatest fears in life. A woman afraid of spiders might appear as an upright carpet of crawling, spectral arachnids, while a soldier who loathed and feared his father in life now resembles him.

Ghostly Succor: On occasion, the spirits attack one another or aid good-aligned adventurers who are in battle against the other creatures of Taer Lian Doresh. One particular banshee is Hashla, a former halfling cleric of Olladra who was hunted and slain by the eladrin viscount named Sidgevin. She retains most of her memories from life and believes that if her remains are found and destroyed, Olladra will bear her spirit to Dolurrh or beyond. To this end, Hashla actively seeks the help of heroes willing to infiltrate the feyspire and locate her corpse. She survived for weeks within the Fortress and can impart her knowledge to willing heroes. Any who slander Olladra or the Sovereign Host in her presence, however, are likely to hear her shriek of death.

MADAME DOTUELLA

Lurking on the outskirts of Shan Doresh's domain, often waging a personal war against the scarecrows and ghosts that surround it, is a hideous she-thing known as Madame Dotuella. Before the arrival of Taer Lian Doresh, none of the rangers of the Whitepine Forest knew what she was. Some surmise that her stock must be descended from the ogres who first came to Khorvaire's shores from Sarlona thousands of years ago. Others speculate that she and her kin were a foul mix of human, ogre, and hag. Whatever they were, she was the last of the backwoods cannibals who dwelt in the depths of the Whitepine and butchered any who came near it. Dotuella is the last of an inbred species living with a menagerie of sick livestock derived from cattle cross-bred with beasts, and she is now a legendary terror in the region.

Dotuella was away from her hut on the Day of Mourning, the same day when Taer Lian Doresh returned to Eberron from its long exile in the Region of Dreams. The sudden and overwhelming presence of the Fortress and Dal Quor's influence absorbed Dotuella's land and warped her into something viler than she already was. Her own twisted dreams of aristocracy manifested in ghastly ways.

What she is now, none can truly say. What she *appears* to be is a 7-foot-tall, morbidly obese woman whose body cannot be supported outside the chariot she rides. The beautiful conveyance is gilded and crusted with gems. She often carries a dainty parasol in one hand and is dressed in a superbly ornate ball gown that pillows out the sides of her chariot and is tattered to rags where it drags on the ground. Madame Dotuella's face is monstrous yet garishly painted, her drooping eyes stare vacantly, her bulk inspires dread. Although her expression remains listless and her mouth opens only to eat, the strange animals who pull her chariot appear to speak *for* her with her own voice as if she can communicate only through them. The animals themselves change from one appearance to the next. On one day, burro-like beasts serve as her mouthpiece and her ride, while on another day, a pair of large, hoofed canines might have the job. Dotuella is sometimes seen gnawing on bones resembling those of her former beasts, with bits of their hide and fur pasted around her mouth.

Finding the Hut: It has been four years since the Day of Mourning—four years that Madame Dotuella has been displaced from her home. She wants it back and will do anything to recover it, including pleading with and offering to reward a party of delicious adventurers. Dotuella attacks characters only if they refuse to assist her, and she'd rather have their help. The Fortress of Fading Dreams appeared where her home used to be, so she surmises that her hut must exist somewhere inside its walls. So far, the fey have not allowed her entry. Avenging this indignation and finding her home again is Dotuella's obsession.

The monstrous female possesses sorcerous powers that lend credence to the theory that she has hag's blood in her veins. She has magic boons to offer and treasures stashed away in the surrounding woods (belongings of those who have failed her). She offers minor rewards in advance to provide incentive, but the best are saved to motivate success. If characters accept her quest, Madame Dotuella gives them a handful of bones—where they came from, she'll not say—with instructions to place them in her hut to 'reclaim' it. What this will do and what implications it might have upon the feyspire, she neither knows nor cares, as long as it allows her to return home.

The hut might change its location within Taer Lian Doresh, but it most often appears within the hippodrome-turned-courtyard known as Night's Refuge.

THE ENDGAME OF SHAN DORESH

The cataclysm of the Mourning intrigues the Lord of the Fading Dream—not only its properties but its origin. Whatever energy destroyed the nation of Cyre also appears to have bound the eladrin feyspires to the mortal world of Eberron. For the time being, Taer Lian Doresh's presence here suits him fine, but he wishes to have control over whether or not it remains. For all the power he drew from the Region of Dreams, Shan Doresh does not wish to return to Dal Quor. His exile is finished. If the Fortress is fated to return, then those who betrayed him long ago must return with him.

To that end, Shan Doresh wishes to learn more about the eladrin of the other feyspires shackled to the soil of Eberron and about the Mournland. He has already dispatched agents to the Eldeen Reaches, Zilargo, Darguun, Karrnath, and dead Cyre. These spies will do whatever they must to study the moves of his ancient kin. Unknown to him, some of the Knights of Terror have begun to venture into these same lands, more out of ambivalent curiosity than any sense of mission at this point.

Shan Doresh is cautious; he knows it is risky to reveal himself or exert his presence too strongly to the other fey lords of Thelanis. If drawing the other feyspires into Dal Quor becomes an impossibility or returning to the Region of Dreams unlikely, Shan Doresh intends to at least make the fears of the eladrin manifest. Regal lords and ladies of the Faerie Court would prefer almost any fate over permanent incarceration—or worse, death—on Eberron, a world of mud and mortal vices. Shan Doresh will bring that about, if his hand is forced.

The Lord of the Fading Dream has great power at his disposal. Not only can he instill horrifying visions in victims and orchestrate their fears from afar, he has the loyal service of his subjects, the thousands of *wyrds* of Taer Lian Doresh who suffered with him in exile. He has the counsel of Marrot the Fool, Santyriana the night hag, and the Shrouded Sages. The caravans of the Harlequinade roam Khorvaire, recruiting nightmares from abroad, while the Knights of Terror quest for whatever Shan Doresh covets or wishes to destroy. The Paranymph forges pacts with mortal warlocks, enlisting them as pawns in the complex game played by the Fading Dream.

Shan Lian Doresh is patient, and he has both time and nightmare on his side.

About the Author

Jeff LaSala is a writer of speculative fiction and an artificer of RPGs. His Eberron novel, *The Darkwood Mask*, was nominated for the Scribe Award and showcases his love for all things dark, monstrous, and masked. Many of his ideas are drawn from the cthonic depths of New York City, where he (roll 1d4)... (1) Dwells with an Argentine mermaid—and even married her; (2) Masquerades as a normal person; (3) Imagines a world splintered into sorry hemispheres; (4) Lurks like a gargoyle over his website: ashlock.org.

DARK·SUN CAMPAIGN SETTING

Eye on Dark Sun

Silt Elementals

by Rodney Thompson ✦ illustration by William O'Connor

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Just as the unique ecology of Athas has given rise to magma elementals of stone and fire (see October's *Eye on Dark Sun* article), so too has the abundance of the unique silt of Athas given rise to elementals of air and earth known as silt elementals. Silt, composed of fine particles of earth and living matter dessiccated by defiling magic, covers Athas like a fine dust in some places, and fills in crevasses in others (such as with the Sea of Silt) to create dangerous, nearly invisible hazards. Silt elementals live and lurk in places like these, and can be dangerous to any who stumble across them. Perhaps because a basic component of their physical form is a substance made from the leavings of defiling magic, silt elementals are highly destructive creatures that seem driven to crush other living beings into a fine powder.

While most silt elementals (and their lesser counterparts) resemble shambling mounts of semi-coherent silt, more powerful silt elementals take on unique shapes. Greater silt elementals, also occasionally referred to as silt beasts or paraelemental beasts, grow not only in strength and coherence but also in their sense of self. Greater silt elementals take on physical forms resembling the long-eradicated krakens of ancient legend, extinct since time beyond memory. Superstitious souls who live among the villages at the edge of the Sea of Silt claim there is something about the sea that demands it be populated with terrible creatures, and that greater silt elementals (which are mainly found near the Sea of Silt) take on the kraken-like forms that they do because Athas itself commands them to.

When silt elementals grow too large, they sometimes lose coherence. While internal forces struggle to keep these elementals together, the nature of the silt causes them to enter a state of fluctuation in which they are constantly falling apart and reconstituting themselves. This process gives them the appearance of a spinning whirlwind of silt; particularly large silt elementals are known as silt cyclones. Silt cyclones rarely persist for long—eventually they fall apart under their own size—but while they exist, they scour the landscape with destructive force.

Lore

Arcana DC 19: Silt elementals are unique creatures that inhabit the wastes of Athas. They are composed of a semi-solid mass of silt with an amorphous form and a weak sense of self. They are animated by a minor intelligence and are driven by an instinct to destroy. They move quickly across the desert and can blend into both sandstorms and silt pools when necessary. They possess weak survival instincts, and throw themselves recklessly against the living creatures of Athas in order to extinguish the last remnants of life on the dying world.

Silt elementals grow quickly by absorbing silt from the desolate wastes and adding it to their own bulk. As they grow in size, they take on more self-aware forms, until eventually they grow so large that they cannot hold themselves together and become raging silt cyclones.

Encounters

Silt elementals lack any ability to interact with other creatures in a manner that would allow them to form alliances or enter into agreements. They do share

SUMMON SILT ELEMENTAL

Though few on Athas know the method of summoning a silt elemental—and most of those who do are evil elemental priests—you may wish to reward an arcane spellcaster character or an elemental priest with the knowledge to summon these dangerous creatures. The following elemental gift serves as a good example of the kind of unique summoning spell that a hero could receive as a reward for completing an adventure or a quest.

The practice of summoning silt elementals originated with elemental cultists of Athas. As silt elementals themselves spread out from the world of Athas into the elemental chaos, more and more powerful spellcasters began learning how to conjure silt elementals even in places where there was little or no silt present from which one could conjure an elemental spirit. At present, the process of summoning a silt elemental can call forth one such creature no matter where the spellcaster is, thanks to their expansion beyond the borders of Athas.

Summon Silt Elemental **Level 5+ Rare**

You call forth a damaged and destructive silt elemental, keeping it under your control for a short while.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp Lvl 25 625,000 gp
Lvl 15 25,000 gp

Elemental Gift

Power (Daily ✦ Summoning): Minor Action; Ranged 5; *Effect*: You summon a silt elemental in an unoccupied space within range. The creature is an ally to you and your allies.

The creature lacks actions of its own. Instead, you spend actions to command it mentally, choosing from the actions in the silt elemental's description. You must have line of effect to the silt elemental to command it. When you command the silt elemental, you and the creature share knowledge, but not senses.

When the silt elemental makes a check, you make the roll using your game statistics, including any temporary bonuses or penalties.

The creature lasts until it drops to 0 hit points, until you dismiss it as a minor action, or until the end of the encounter. Each round, if you do not give the silt elemental any commands, you must make a saving throw at the end of your turn; if you fail the saving throw, this effect ends, and you replace the summoned silt elemental with a lesser silt elemental creature, which is hostile.

Level 15: Replace the summoned silt elemental with a level 11 silt elemental creature.

Level 25: Replace the summoned silt elemental with a level 21 greater silt elemental creature.

an odd kinship with both earth elementals and air elementals and seem reluctant to attack them.

Silt elementals are often summoned by elemental priests (particularly cultists without good intentions) and forced by magic to do their bidding. A silt elemental seen in the company of an evil elemental priest or other creature capable of powerful summoning magic (such as some of the giants that live on islands in the Sea of Silt) almost certainly falls into this category. Silt elementals slowly erode the control that a summoning spell has over them, eventually becoming independent and inevitably turning on their summoners.

Silt Elemental **Summoned Creature**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth)

HP your bloodied value; **Healing Surges** none, but you can expend a healing surge for the silt elemental if an effect allows it to spend one.
Defenses your defenses +2, not including any temporary bonuses or penalties.
Speed 7

Standard Action ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); your level +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 + your level damage, plus an additional 2d6 damage if the target is slowed or immobilized.
Level 15: 3d6 damage.
Level 25: 5d6 damage.

Standard Action ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); your level +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 + your level damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Move Action ✦ At-Will
Effect: The silt elemental shifts 3 squares, and can shift through enemies' spaces. The first time during this shift that the silt elemental enters an enemy's space, that enemy takes 5 damage and is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Opportunity Action ✦ At-Will
Trigger: An enemy hits you with a melee attack while within 10 squares of the silt elemental.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The silt elemental shifts its speed to a square adjacent to the triggering enemy, and makes either of its standard action attacks against the triggering enemy as a free action.

Lesser Silt Elemental **Level 1 Skirmisher**
Small elemental magical beast (air, earth) XP 100

HP 24; **Bloodied** 12 **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 11 **Perception** +1
Speed 7 Tremorsense 5
Vulnerable 5 force (see *incoherent form*)

Traits

Incoherent Form
A silt elemental takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks. Whenever a silt elemental takes force damage, it takes full damage from the attack, even if it is from a melee or ranged attack.

Silt Stride
A silt elemental can walk on silt as though it were solid ground.

Standard Actions

Silt Fist ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 7 damage, plus an additional 2d6 damage if the target is slowed or immobilized.

Silt Slam ✦ Recharge
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 10 damage and the target is immobilized until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Move Actions

Silt Shift ✦ At-Will
Effect: The silt elemental shifts 3 squares, and can shift through enemies' spaces. The first time during this shift that the silt elemental enters an enemy's space, that enemy takes 5 damage and is slowed until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.

Str 13 (+1)	**Dex** 13 (+1)	**Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 16 (+3)	**Int** 4 (-3)	**Cha** 6 (-2)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Silt Elemental **Level 11 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth) XP 600

HP 87; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +11
AC 25, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 **Perception** +7
Speed 8 Tremorsense 5
Vulnerable 10 force (see *incoherent form*)

Traits

Incoherent Form
A silt elemental takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks. Whenever a silt elemental takes force damage, it takes full damage from the attack, even if it is from a melee or ranged attack.

Silt Stride
A silt elemental can walk on silt as though it were solid ground.

Standard Actions

Silt Fist ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage, plus an additional 2d6 damage if the target is slowed or immobilized.

Pound to the Ground ✦ Encounter
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8 + 11 damage and the target is knocked prone and immobilized (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Silt Swipe ✦ Recharge ⚅
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in blast); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage and the target is immobilized until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.

Move Actions

Silt Shift ✦ At-Will
Effect: The silt elemental shifts 3 squares, and can shift through enemies' spaces. The first time during this shift that the silt elemental enters an enemy's space, that enemy takes 5 damage and is slowed until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.

Str 16 (+8)	**Dex** 18 (+9)	**Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	**Int** 4 (+2)	**Cha** 6 (+3)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Greater Silt Elemental **Level 21 Skirmisher**
Large elemental magical beast (air, earth) XP 3,200

HP 151; **Bloodied** 75 **Initiative** +17
AC 35, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31 **Perception** +14
Speed 9 Tremorsense 5
Vulnerable 15 force (see *incoherent form*)

Traits

Camouflage
A silt elemental gains a +10 bonus to Stealth checks when completely within an area of silt.

Incoherent Form
A silt elemental takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks. Whenever a silt elemental takes force damage, it takes full damage from the attack, even if it is from a melee or ranged attack.

Silt Stride
A silt elemental can walk on silt as though it were solid ground.

Standard Actions

Silt Tentacle ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +26 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, plus an additional 3d6 damage if the target is slowed or immobilized.

Swiping Tentacles ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 3 (one, two, three or four creatures); +24 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 2 damage.

Silt Whirlpool ✦ Recharge when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +22 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The silt elemental pulls the creature 2 squares, and can pull creatures into its own space. Any creature pulled into the silt elemental's space is grabbed by the silt elemental (escape DC 35).
Miss: The target is immobilized until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.
Sustain Standard: The silt elemental sustains all of its grabs, and each grabbed creature takes 4d10 + 7 damage. Creatures that do not breathe, or those immune to suffocation, are also immune to the damage dealt by this attack.

Move Actions

Silt Shift ✦ At-Will
Effect: The silt elemental shifts 5 squares, and can shift through enemies' spaces. The first time during this shift that the silt elemental enters an enemy's space, that enemy takes 10 damage and is slowed until the end of the silt elemental's next turn.

Str 23 (+16)	**Dex** 21 (+15)	**Wis** 19 (+14)
Con 26 (+18)	**Int** 4 (+7)	**Cha** 6 (+8)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Silt Cyclone **Level 16 Elite Controller**
Huge elemental magical beast (air, earth) XP 2,800
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60 **Initiative** +12
AC 30, **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26 **Perception** +11
Speed 7 Tremorsense 5
Vulnerable 10 force (see *incoherent form*)
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Blinding Silt ✦ Aura 2
Creatures within the aura have partial concealment from creatures outside of the aura, and vice versa.

Incoherent Form
A silt cyclone takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks. Whenever a silt cyclone takes force damage, it takes full damage from the attack, even if it is from a melee or ranged attack.

Silt Cyclone's Action
A silt cyclone can always use a minor action to use *whipping silt tendril*, even when dazed or stunned, in addition to any other actions it takes.

Silt Stride
A silt cyclone can walk on silt as though it were solid ground.

Standard Actions

Silt Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 4d8 + 6 damage.

Silt Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage, and the silt cyclone slides the target 3 squares.

Fling Away ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 2 (one or two creatures in burst); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 13 damage, and the silt cyclone pushes the target 6 squares.

Funnel Jump ✦ Recharges when first bloodied
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d10 + 8 damage, and the silt cyclone pushes the target 6 squares and the target is blinded (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The silt cyclone slides the target 6 squares to a square outside of the burst. The silt cyclone then flies up to 10 squares to occupy the space of the burst.

Minor Actions

Whipping Silt Tendril ✦ At-Will 1/Round
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 11 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Str 20 (+13)	**Dex** 18 (+12)	**Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 24 (+15)	**Int** 4 (+5)	**Cha** 6 (+6)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Primordial

Silt Elementals in Combat

Silt elementals and their lesser cousins tend to be highly mobile, sweeping across the battlefield like silt blows across the surface of Athas. A silt elemental prefers to prey upon those who show themselves to be weakened or otherwise hindered and focus their efforts especially tightly on enemies that have difficulty escaping from the silt elementals. Thanks to their great speed, a silt elemental can dash quickly across the battlefield to pounce on enemies that might have been tripped up or slowed by the elemental's allies.

Greater silt elementals, on the other hand, fight more like the ancient krakens and hydras they visually resemble. The greater silt elemental tries to maneuver itself to a place near the middle of its enemies before spinning rapidly and creating a whirlpool of silt that can choke its enemies to death, even indoors.

Silt Cyclones in Combat

Silt cyclones are dangerous, short-lived creatures, and they act appropriately erratically. A silt cyclone controls the area surrounding itself and likes to toss its enemies around, never letting them catch their balance. Every so often, the silt cyclone will leap across the land like a tornado jumping over a building to strike at a completely different area, changing the dynamic of the battle by manipulating a totally new part of the battlefield.

About the Author

Rodney Thompson is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast. Originally from Chattanooga, TN, his credits for Dungeons & Dragons® include *Monster Manual 3*, the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and *Monster Vault*.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

Ed Greenwood's Eye on the Realms

Rastigur Stornont

by Ed Greenwood ✦ illustration by Warren Mahy

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Down the centuries, Waterdeep has enjoyed no shortage of lazy, gruff, fat, and swindling merchants—and it's in no danger of experiencing one right now. Rastigur Stornont, the snarling epitome of such stereotypical greedy traders, is currently riding high in the City of Splendors.

Trading in sundry wares as he lurks in Mistshore, Downshadow, and Dock Ward, this burly, paunchy man has such a prodigious capacity for drink that he's widely thought to be a hopeless drunkard—but he can function quite well after imbibing amounts that leave most drinkers senseless. He often acts drunk when he's almost sober, and enthusiastically enhances his debauched reputation, which is becoming legendary as his success and public profile rise.

"Old Roaring Rastigur" is happy to be the Mirt the Moneylender of his time. Like Mirt, he's amoral rather than wholly evil, and he does some legitimate trading. He also shows kindness and gives aid on whims, out of fond regard, and to those who might be useful to him.

Yet Stornont is also behind many thefts, swindles, and feuds among thieving bands, rival merchants, and noble houses. He engineers them so as to pluck property and wealth from participants while they're busy trying to kill each other. Adventurers are Stornont's favorite weapons. He fights and mainly runs when he must, but prefers not to risk his hide, or be in sight when "bad things" happen. As a result, he uses layer upon layer of adventuring bands—some working for each other and others working against each other—to conceal his own involvement in matters.

"A rising crime lord," the social critic Markarl Mightyeye called Stornont recently. Markarl is the pseudonym of an unknown but all-seeing, shrewdly catty city writer published daily in the *Waterdeep Wartrumpet* broadsheet. Rastigur's longtime rival and nemesis, the former pirate turned successful trader "Scartongue" Sardron Thandarn of Trades Ward often refers to Stornont as "that great blustering spoiled-ale cask of a man." By contrast, the brothelkeeper Alanthra Ghellowsar (of *The Laughing Lass* on Ship Street) admiringly described him as being the "smartest man in Waterdeep" and "the city's best actor, too."

From the Foaming Tankard

Stornont's career began at age seven, when his flung stone struck a brewer's assistant senseless at the *Foaming Tankard* brew-tavern. Stornont framed the youth for thievery and took his place at the ale-vats, toiling diligently for months as his fellow assistants mysteriously drowned in those vats, one after another. Eventually brewmaster Eldro Heldargram, owner of the *Tankard*, unaccountably lost his footing one night and met his end in a brew, leaving Stornont the lone surviving brewer—and owner of the *Tankard*.

Stornont promptly converted the place into a festhall called *The Foamy Smile*. Within its doors, patrons imbibed overpriced drinks spiked with various highly

addictive drugs concocted in the attic by an eladrin herbmaster, who was perfecting substances he would later use in his own—quite separate—revenge.

When the *Smile* had acquired so many regular patrons that they could no longer fit within its walls, Stornont expanded into the shop next door, and then the one beyond, taking over an entire city block one building at a time. Owners who were reluctant to sell got their shops trashed by drunken adventurers whose brawls "just happened" to burst through their buildings—night after night, in some cases.

Once the entire block was his, Stornont promptly sold it—for a great amount of money—to a caravan company that had been seeking space enough for its own within-the-city-walls Waterdhavian depot for years. With his newfound wealth, he bought small corner shops all over southern Waterdeep, installing tenant shopkeepers in them who sold their own wares and a new line of broadsheets Stornont published. These publications aggressively advertised particular merchants—in return for their handsome payments. This sort of advertising (with drawn illustrations, large presentation, and lavish writing, as opposed to simple lines of "what we do and sell" with an address) was new to Waterdeep at the time, and it became a huge hit.

Stornont put the handsome resulting profits into buying larger, grander buildings in Sea Ward and North Ward, and taking in wealthier tenants. He pointedly ignored the activities of these folk, no matter how illicit (as long as rent troubles weren't among them). He then applied the profits from these rentals to sponsoring importation of many wares Stornont shrewdly judged Waterdhavians to lack and would desire to acquire—and he was right often enough to become very wealthy indeed. He is still pursuing this road to riches today.

The Tools of His Trade

Rastigur Stornont looks grossly fat, but much of his bulk is his various "coats-of-many-pouches" (vests with double-breasted tied-across flaps to cover most of the pouches) and the many, many things he carries in them. These include the following:

- A fine mesh thumb-box containing a deadly poisonous spider
- A fine mesh thumb-box containing a horrid-looking but harmless spider
- A 10-foot-long fine black tripwire, ending in two (sheathed) needle-spikes and fitted with a "tensioner" that can reel it taut if less than 10 feet is needed
- A skin of fine firewine
- A skin of blakkalan wine doctored with sleep powder (that retains its efficacy for months in blakkalan)
- A sealed bladder of human blood
- A false beard
- A false, strap-on feminine bosom (or odd-looking male paunch) that is actually a molded cage covered in flesh-hue-painted cloth, which contains a watertight storage bladder customarily filled with several towels (in which coins can be wrapped to muffle clinking)
- A black eyepatch
- A black eyepatch with tiny tentacles sewn onto it that have been rubbed with black althor sap (which changes viscosity and shape rapidly under varying temperature and light, causing the tentacles to writhe and curl)
- Three small, empty thumb-boxes, one covered in glimmerweave fabric to look like an expensive gift
- A human eyeball, preserved in sherry in a stout glass "finger" vial
- A human finger, preserved in sherry in a stout glass "finger" vial
- A false (dyed glass, but a skillful fake) gem, crown-cut and large enough to fill a child's palm
- Three lengths of stout strangling wire
- A padlock and three keys for it
- A set of lockpicks fashioned to look like a harnessmaker's sewing kit
- Three matching dice, two of which are weighted
- A pair of ludicrously thick spectacles
- A pouch containing 6 gp, 2 sp, and 3 cp
- A finger-pouch containing a single steel coin with half its edge honed razor-sharp (and covered with a steel guard)
- A dead (pickled) viper
- A finger-pouch containing six human teeth, preserved in brandy
- A portable set of scales; its crossbeam slides apart to reveal a needle-blade dagger
- A metal doorstop wedge
- A metal "eye" wedge (pierced, so a cord or fine chain can be passed through it)
- A pair of steel "knuckles" for use in fighting, or as a hammer to drive wedges
- Forty feet of fine black climbing cord, knotted at every foot and ending in a metal broadhook (for spanning wide windowsills)
- A pair of black silken lady's pantaloons
- A "black stick" soot-and-paste marking "thall" (crayon)

STORNONT'S DEEP-POCKET CLOAK

You can add the following item to your campaign. If Stornont himself is not in your game, then the cloak still ought to be in the hands of someone similar to Stornont. This is identical to the standard level 17 *deep-pocket cloak* with two exceptions; it grants an item bonus to Bluff and Stealth checks, and it's a rare item, as befits its owner.

Stornont's Deep-Pocket Cloak **Level 17**
Rare

Hundreds of magically hidden pockets on this cloak allow you to keep a wealth of items close at hand.

Level 17 +4 65,000 gp
Item Slot: Neck
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, Will
Property: The pockets of this cloak can hold up to 1,000 pounds in weight or 100 cubic feet in volume, but the cloak always weighs only 1 pound. Each item stored within one of the cloak's pockets can weigh no more than 10 pounds. Drawing an item from a deep-pocket cloak is a minor action.
Property: You gain an item bonus to Bluff checks and Stealth checks equal to the cloak's enhancement bonus.
Power (At-Will): Once per round, you can draw an item from the cloak or store an item within it as a free action.

- A notepad
- A metal bird-beak quill pen
- A finger-vial of black ink
- A finger-vial of "vanishing" ink
- A lodestone (magnet)
- A "royal-guard" gem (a gem that acts as *clearwater solution*, just once, when immersed in a liquid)

The Castle Vaults

Adventurers—preferably unknown or outlander adventurers who have recently arrived in Waterdeep—are Stornont's preferred tools. He uses them as his "hands" (and decoys, to do the "hot work" and ultimately be framed for it all) in his latest scheme.

He seeks to plunder the city government of a lot of tax funds by overpaying the palace and then demanding repayment of the "mistake," and sending the adventurers to observe how the castle's coin vaults are accessed.

Stornont later uses hired mages to overcome the castle guards, and then he sends in the adventurers to get the funds and alerts the palace to send other guards in after the "thieving" adventurers. After that, he uses *other* hired mages to daze, put asleep, and visit hallucinations on those "other guards"—and then he sends in his own trusted ladies from Mistshore to steal all they can carry off. At the same time, tavern dancers hired by him for the purpose (but told nothing of what's going on at the castle) distract everyone in the vicinity.

During this, Stornont intends to be dining elsewhere with as many Lords of Waterdeep as he can identify and lure to a revel. He might well succumb to the temptation to add sleep drugs to their drinks, as well as to all the free wine and ale his hired servants dispenses to the lords' bodyguards and assistants.

Whereupon he'll take a stroll in the night air to clear his head and just happen to notice some sort of trouble at Castle Waterdeep . . .

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the *Forgotten Realms* on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and even romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is still happiest churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. There are still a few rooms in his house with space left to pile up papers in . . .

Master the Treasury

by Stephen Radney-MacFarland
illustration by Wayne England

Given enough time, certain arguments and kerfluffles will occur around the game table. Someone will quote Monty Python, and often the table will split into two camps: those who Holy Grail and those who think it's stupid (the latter camp is wrong, of course!). Someone will bicker about alignment and the conundrum of where Batman sits on that matrix. And before the first character drops in a campaign, some dude in the group will insist he doesn't believe in using *raise dead* or similar back-to-life effects. "Pure cheese," he calls them, yet he finds justification to use them when his character kicks it.

And then there is treasure.

On the player side, the conflict typically hinges on the fact that players don't feel like they have enough treasure or they don't have the right bits of treasure. In 4E, those players can point to treasure assumptions, poor defenses (real or imagined), or their "wish lists" to fuel such arguments. One player in my game has more magic items from his wish list than any other player in the group, and often more magic *items* of all types than anyone else in the group, yet he still complains about his treasure deficiencies *ad nauseum*.

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On the DM side, managing treasure is one of the more tedious tasks in upkeep. Making sure that everyone has the treasure they need so they don't "lag behind," as *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* puts it, can make DMs wonder what happened to the magic of magic items. Other DMs may become frustrated with the various flavors of the magic item game that become more numerous with each month. They'll get wish lists from their players, or overhear conversations their players are having on the sweet bit of optimization they've discovered with the release of the newest supplement or issue of *Dragon* magazine, only to be stymied in their role of Santa by finding that item was the new hotness last month, the optimization boards have moved on to something new, and so has the player.

This month, let's look at some itemization strategies that can help the grumblers on both sides.

Handing Over the Wish List

Some DMs are not fans of the wish list. They see it as blatant grabbiness or as breaking the game's narrative.

They have a point. Wish lists serve the purpose of putting useful things into the characters' hands and allowing players to build the characters of their dreams, but too-hasty implementation can cheapen the wonder of a magic hoard.

The new magic item rarity scheme offers a good model to follow. Limit wish lists to the normal, baseline versions of armor, weapons, implements, and neck items. It's OK to assume that armor has the baseline masterwork bonus (for light armors, +1 at 14th, +2 at 24th; for heavy armors, +3 at 14th and +4 at 24th). This lets you give out +1 items early, +2 items starting somewhere around 4th level, +3 items at about 9th, +4 items at about 14th, +5 items at 19th, and +6 items at 24th, before allowing for masterwork bonuses.

But what about all those other properties and powers? Those are what really put the magic into magic items!

Let them be discovered. And by "them," I mean the properties, not entirely new items. Treat every magic item as if it's a legacy item.* In a manner similar to the Alternative Rewards system in *Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, you can create story seeds, allow NPC sages or wizards to unlock powers within an item, or just riff off something amazing that a character did that could reveal or merit a new power. Base the powers on those already littering magic item sections of books and the online *Rules Compendium*. Alternatively, you could set up triggers where the characters' magic items get better according to some subtle schedule and allow players a certain amount of control over what they get.

* For readers unfamiliar with that concept, a legacy item is a magic item with powers and properties that aren't apparent when it's first acquired; its power keeps pace with yours. You thought that you found a simple +1 sword. It was two days later before you discovered that it could become searing hot at your command, and you carried it for two years before the fortune teller unlocked its potential to trigger small earthquakes.

For example, you could allow critical hits to have a chance to unlock latent properties and powers in a magical weapon or implement. On the other end of the spectrum, when a character is missed by a monster or trap with a natural 1, this could unlock a property or power of armor or a neck item (based on the defense under attack). The specifics must be up to you. You might require a second die roll, along the lines of 'confirming' the hit or miss, as 3E did for all critical hits. Or you might require quests and knowledgeable NPCs to unlock latent powers. In either case, the player has some control over the power, with the caveat that it must somehow fit within the story. The player gets the new toy when the DM approves of the story, not before.

Fun with Random Treasure

If you haven't played with the new treasure charts in Essentials, you should. I hate random, but I have to admit that rolling for treasure really appeals to me. Part of this has to do with the joy I had as a kid rolling up treasure. Hey, it was the 80s! But there is something to be said about a system that can surprise even the DM during the game ... in a good way.

The problem with random tables of all the treasure possible in today's day and age is that it's a moving target. With books coming out every month, you would like the *D&D Compendium* to do that sort of thing. But even if it did, the number of items within certain slots would make the selection overly random and cough up a lot of items the characters have no use for other than to pawn for cash. (Remember *Diablo*?)

With different class builds and all the class-optimized items out there, you will end up doing what I did in the 80s—rolling and rerolling until you get a useful item. The solution, I think, is to make your own random magic item generator. You can either have

people submit their wish list, or you can include the items you'd like the characters to find. I think a mix of both works best; here's how.

At every level, let your players make a wish list of three items. For each character, you come up with another three items. I like to go high on wondrous items, consumables, and the head, belt, feet, arms, and hands slots at common and uncommon rarity to balance out most players' focus on uncommon or rare weapons, implements, and neck items. You and the players bring item cards from the character builder, and you create a deck of magic items. When treasure pops up, a card is drawn. If you don't want to make a deck, you could just randomize with dice, but there's something satisfying about placing a physical object in a player's hand, even if it's only a card.

The key point is that the deck resets every level. Players and DMs are welcome to put cards from past decks into the new level's mix, but they can also opt for all-new items. Yes, there's some metagaming involved, but it's enjoyable metagaming that does an effective job of creating a more interactive and focused treasure environment while retaining some randomness and surprise.

Make It Up!

Don't be afraid to make up new magic items. Unless you are playing in a shared campaign of some sort, the only people you need to please are those sitting around you. Your new item may not talk to the *D&D Character Builder*, but don't worry. Players are not reluctant to apply a good-old pencil to their character sheet if the payoff is shiny new toy for their character. The gods of game balance will not judge you poorly. Wizards has never had a goon squad that comes to your door and makes sure you're playing D&D "the right way."

The game is a tool to tell your own story within the fantasy genre. Mash items up; give them crazy interesting powers; do whatever you like, as long as your players are enjoying it. The only person who has to live with the effects of those items is you.

Mailbag

This month, the mailbox has an old question with some new ideas and a new question with a most definitive answer.

Large Groups Redux

Hey guys, I was hoping you could help me with a DM problem.

I run a game with a large group. We have 6 regular players in the party as well as one or two irregulars. I often find that fights that might take 30-40 minutes but provide a reasonable challenge for a 4 or 5 player group can take as long as 2 hours with my (large) group just to provide the same level of challenge. Can you give me any advice on how to either speed up fights or perhaps how to design encounters for larger groups that don't just involve larger numbers of monsters? I have tried throwing much higher level monsters at the group before but the problem I find is that the party can wind up needing to roll 17+ just to hit their armor class, which needless to say isn't much fun for anyone.

Oisín (it's an Irish name, pronounced usheen if you are wondering) from email

Large games are always a problem, and something that Save My Game has addressed before. But before you use that advice, ask yourself this question: who are the fights too long for, you or your players? If the answer is your players or both, absolutely find a way to speed up the action. Use cards or some other form of initiative tracker, reward players somehow for speedy turns, and use a good number of minions or lower-level monsters as chaff. You can also create more combat puzzle encounters, where there is a way to end the encounter without killing all the monsters. All of these can help.

If the answer is that it is going on too long for you but the players are still having a blast, then find ways to spice up the encounter with triggers, story points, and traps. Ask yourself what *you* like about encounters and encounter flow. Then make sure you put those elements in your big encounters. Small skill challenges (no bigger than complexity 1) that can dramatically change the tone of the battle are one of my favorite tricks.

Imagine, for instance, the lair of a dread necromancer. He might be an elite monster surrounded by a bunch of wraiths and skeletal chaff. Behind the necromancer is a glowing purple orb upon a pedestal. The orb is the focus for the wraiths. If it can be disabled, then the wraiths go poof! Conversely, maybe the necromancer is only aided by the skeletal chaff and the floor of this place is a litter of bones. The orb could create another skeleton each time one is destroyed. The only way to stop the effect is by disabling the orb or the death of the necromancer. There doesn't need to be an overwhelming number of monsters to keep everyone occupied, because some players will be busy dealing with the puzzle and/

or trap. Fewer monsters for you to control means a quicker encounter.

You could use that basic structure with just about any encounter with enough creativity and invention.

How Dead Should Someone Be?

When a player dies in a campaign, which is better–Let the player roll up another character at the same (or 1-2 lower) than the rest of the party or make the player roll up another character at level 1? At what point does the difference in party level vs. new character level become detrimental to the game?

-MOshing_smurf from the Save My Game Wizards Community group.

First, never, ever start a new character at 1st level if all the other characters are level 2 or higher. That way lies madness in the form of one frustrated player.

It would be better to either let the character be resurrected or come back as a character at the same level as the rest of the party. The problem is that the latter choice creates a story disconnect, and in this day and age, can bring a bit of rules creep.

Even in a game as balanced as D&D, new rules material often comes with a deeper understanding by the designer of the game system. That phenomenon alone creates more optimal choices in classes and other rules-related decisions. A new character also gives a player to optimize from the ground floor, with all the new understanding of the game that he's learned, which can make other characters that grew more organically seem a bit out of sorts.

Rather than having a character come in at a lower level, it's better to let the player build the character and have the DM assign magic items. Always err on the side of giving fewer or sub-optimal magic items, but not ones that are totally useless. This enhances the illusion of an organic item distribution and gives the new character something to strive for. If you were too stingy, it's easy to rectify during play—much easier than if you were too generous.

You could also give the character the -1 penalty until three milestones have been reached that is already intrinsic in the Raise Dead ritual, but have a good story reason for it. Maybe the character just escaped a sticky situation or is under the effect of a curse. With the curse option, you could have a story trigger for the penalty's end rather than just relying on milestones.

About the Author

Stephen Radney-MacFarland caught the D&D bug at an impressionable age. Once the content manager for the RPGA, and a developer for the 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons® rules, he is now a freelance game designer doing work for Wizards of the Coast and Paizo Publishing, and he is part of a fledgling group of game commentators and game designers called NeoGrognard. During the daylight hours, he teaches game production classes at the International Academy of Design and Technology of Seattle.

Revisiting the Room of Pools

A classic Dungeons & Dragons® module encounter and DM exercise for heroic tier player characters.

By Craig A. Campbell

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B1
FOR USE WITH D&D® BASIC RULES
Dungeon Module B1
In Search of the Unknown
by Mike Carr
INTRODUCTORY MODULE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3
This package (a cover folder with maps and descriptive booklet within) forms a complete module for use with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Basic Set. It is especially designed as an instructional aid for beginning Dungeon Masters and players, specifically created to enable new Dungeon Masters to initiate play with a minimum of preparation.
In addition to descriptive and situational material, this module also includes special informational sections giving background history and legends, listings of possible monsters and treasures and how to place them, a list of adventuring characters, tips on various aspects of play for the Dungeon Master, and helpful advice for starting players.
If you enjoy this module, look for more releases in the D&D® family from TSR, The Game Wizards.
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9023

In 1981, TSR published Dungeon Module B1: In Search of the Unknown. *This adventure module was designed as an introductory adventure for Dungeon Masters and players alike. Instead of describing a single, self-contained adventure, it provided a framework for new DMs to test their design skills by using the module to flesh out their own adventure, incorporating the dungeon into their story as they saw fit.*

Near the end of the dungeon, author Mike Carr described a chamber dotted with fourteen unique pools, each filled with a strange liquid. The heroes explored this chamber and the pools within it as part of the overall story.

These pools and their contents have remained undisturbed for nearly thirty years. Are you ready to take your players into the Room of Pools?

The following encounter recreates this room and continues to serve as a template for DMs to explore the fun and challenge of designing their own encounters.

A Note on Spoilers

Although the pools and their contents have been updated to the current rules, they are all based on the pools described in the original module. In some cases, the pools are exactly as described in 1981, with adjustments for the current rule set. However, those that have been modified remain at least reminiscent of the original descriptions. You have been warned.

Translating the Classic

This encounter recreates the Room of Pools from *B1: In Search of the Unknown*. It uses the same chamber layout and the same pools present in the original module. However, it has been updated to incorporate the tenets of current adventure design.

In the original adventure, the heroes could test the pools and never be severely hindered in the long term. If the liquid in a pool injured them or otherwise impacted them negatively, they could wait and have the effects wear off or find some healing before moving on.

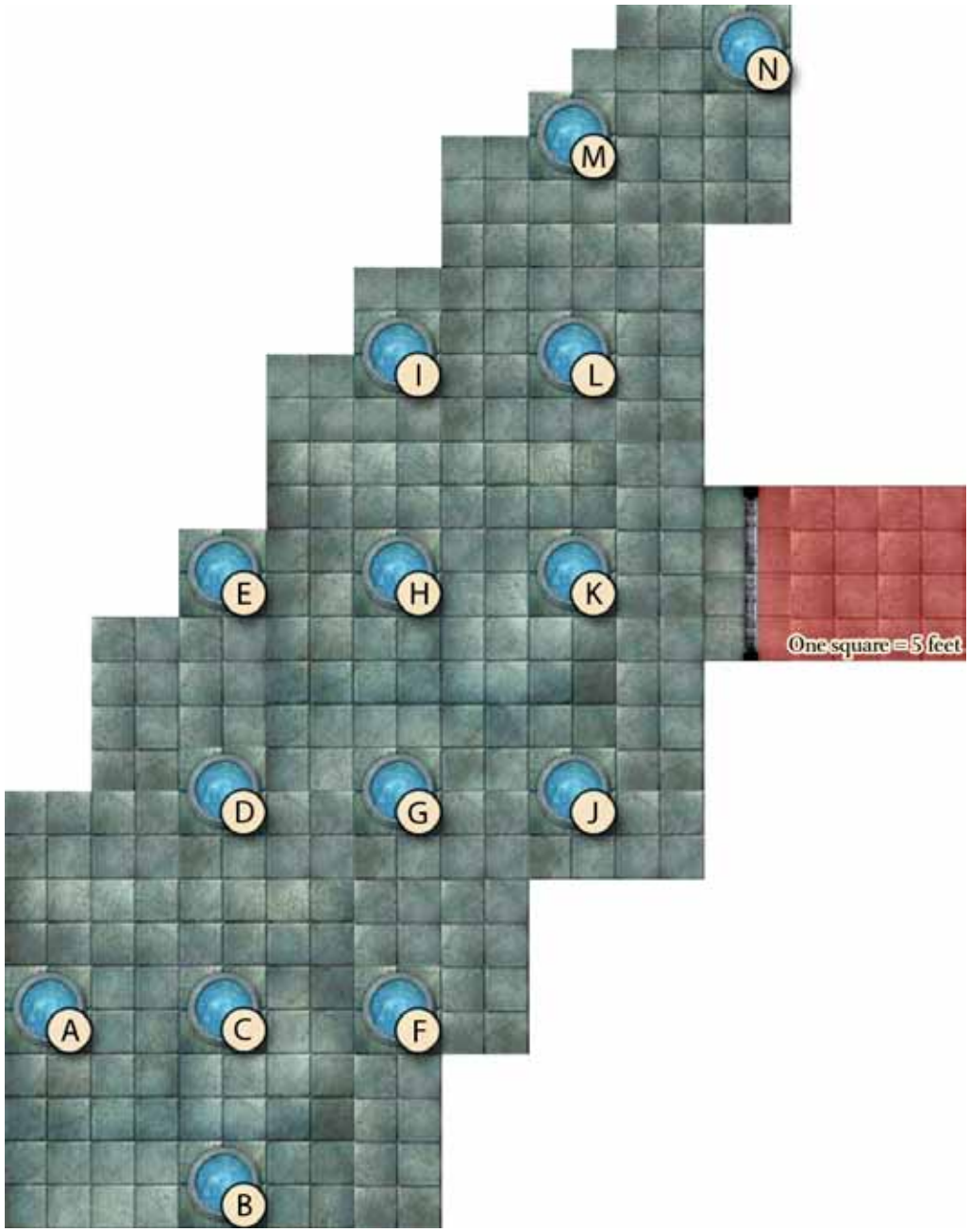
This conversion seeks to make the effects of the pools more problematic to the heroes; that is, to make them a greater challenge. Although some pools still damage a hero who imbibes or touches the contents of a pool, several cause longer-lasting effects. Others have a more "story-oriented" effect, not damaging the heroes directly, but instead affecting them in other ways.

As always (and especially here), the information provided is open to DM caveat. If you wish to modify the effects of the contents of a particular pool, feel free to do so. Like the original module, this conversion is a framework. Use whatever parts you want. Change things as needed for your story.

Above all, have fun with it.

The Room of Pools Map

The encounter map can be built from any dungeon tile sets that include basic dungeon floor tiles.



A NOTE ON LEVELS

This conversion is intended for player characters of the heroic tier. Much of what follows is built around the supposition that the heroes are in the 4th-6th level range. However, you might be DMing for heroes of slightly higher or lower level.

If this is the case, feel free to adjust the DCs of skill checks described below to fall more in line with the heroes' capabilities. Additionally, monsters described below can be adjusted up or down in level by using the guidelines presented on page 174 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Encounter: The Room of Pools

This encounter takes place in a subterranean chamber of great age. Although the map provides a single entrance to the chamber (the heroes start in the shaded red area), you might determine that several other entry points lead into the area for the purposes of your adventure.

When the heroes first arrive in the Room of Pools, read:

You survey the large chamber before you. The entire chamber is constructed of expertly crafted masonry, though it shows the wear of age. The floor is composed of an intricate pattern of multicolored stone tiles. The walls are solid and robust. The ceiling of the chamber is a series of vaults and beams that create a spiderweb of structure that would make the greatest dwarf mason proud. Several of the floor, wall, and ceiling stones are adorned with strange markings.

Dotted throughout the chamber are sunken, stone pools, each 10 feet in diameter and rimmed by a slightly raised stone perimeter. Each pool contains a different liquid.

Except for your footsteps and heartbeats, the chamber is quiet.

DETECTING MAGIC IN THE ROOM OF POOLS

This encounter is intended to be an exercise in exploration and trial-and-error for the heroes. For players who enjoy the roleplaying exercise of such exploration, encourage their search activities (continue to provide details and results the further they experiment with the pools, and so on). As such, few specific rules are provided for heroes who wish to make Arcana checks to detect magic to learn more.

That said, other players might be less comfortable with open-endedness and might prefer skill checks to discover information. If you wish to allow heroes to use Arcana checks to determine things about the pools and their contents, assume that all the pools with obviously magical qualities are level 7 arcane effects. Provide information on appropriate keywords; for example, the pool of acid has the "acid" keyword.

However, we recommend trying to keep this encounter as a trial-and-error adventure for the heroes.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The chamber is permeated by a dull glow that provides normal illumination, though no specific light source is apparent.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the chamber is 6 squares above the floor.

Walls: The walls of the chamber are composed of expertly crafted masonry. Climbing the cavern walls requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

Floor: The chamber floor is dry and provides no impediment to movement.

Pools: Fourteen pools are distributed throughout the chamber. Each is bowl-shaped, 10 feet (2 squares) in diameter, and about 4 feet deep at the center.

The Pools

Each pool is described in detail below, but DMs should feel free to modify whatever aspects they wish. The pools are lettered A–N in accordance with the pool room map. Game mechanic effects of the pools are described according to the following statistics block template.

Pool Name
Drink: Description of what happens if a creature drinks a mouthful of the liquid.
Touch: Description of what happens if a creature places a bare hand or foot in the liquid.
Partial Submersion: Description of what happens if a creature submerges one or two limbs in the liquid, or stands in the pool.
Full Submersion: Description of what happens if a creature falls completely into the pool.
Application: Description of what happens if a creature applies the liquid to an item or if items worn by creatures are fully submerged.

Individual pool statistics blocks might not contain all these effect entries. If an entry is not present in a statistics block, nothing of note happens in that instance.

A. Pool of Healing

A warm, pink liquid fills this pool, smelling faintly of ripe fruit. It tastes of tart raspberries and is thick and sticky to the touch. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its potency but is still tasty.

Pool of Healing

Drink: The creature regains 1d4 hit points. Subsequent drinks provide no additional benefits until after the creature has taken an extended rest.

Partial Submersion: The creature regains 1d8 hit points. Subsequent partial submersions provide no additional benefits until after the creature has taken an extended rest.

Full Submersion: The creature can spend a healing surge to regain hit points equal to its surge value. Alternatively, the creature can spend a healing surge to cure itself of one disease. Subsequent full submersions provide no additional benefits until after the creature has taken an extended rest.

B. Pool of Acid

A bubbling, clear liquid fills this pool. It smells faintly of burned wood and has an acrid taste. If a small, breakable container is filled with the acid, treat this container as level 6 *alchemist's acid* (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 24).

Pool of Acid

Drink: The creature takes 1d6 acid damage.

Touch: The creature takes 1d4 acid damage.

Partial Submersion: The creature takes 1d10 acid damage.

Full Submersion: The creature takes 1d10 acid damage and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

Application: Small nonmetal, nonstone items are dissolved completely. Larger nonmetal, nonstone items are scarred but otherwise left intact. Metal and stone items are unaffected.

C. Pool of Sickness

This pool is filled with a murky, gray syrup. It is thick and sticky to the touch, and is sour on the tongue. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its potency.

Pool of Sickness

Drink: The creature is initially unaffected. However, 1d4 hours after imbibing the liquid, the creature loses a healing surge and grows sick to the stomach. The creature takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks. Only a Cure Disease ritual (or a submersion in the pool of healing, above) can cure the sickness.

D. Pool of Green Slime

A thick, slimy, green liquid fills this pool. It has no odor. The liquid in this pool is a green slime. If a hero attempts to touch the slime carefully, the surface of the slime moves slightly toward the hero's hand. If a hero makes any more significant move to touch or grab the slime, it emerges from its resting place and attacks.

Pool of Green Slime

Partial Submersion: The green slime attacks the creature.

Full Submersion: If a creature falls into the green slime, the green slime engulfs it as a free action. See the green slime statistics below.

Green Slime **Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze) XP 175

HP 47; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +9
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14 **Perception** +2
Speed 4, climb 4 Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid; **Vulnerable** 5 fire, 5 radiant

Traits

Ooze
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the –5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

⸸ **Engulf** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and the slime grabs the target (escape DC 18). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage. Attacks that hit the slime deal half damage to the slime and half damage to a single creature grabbed by the slime.

Skills Stealth +10

Str 11 (+2)	**Dex** 16 (+5)	**Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 17 (+5)	**Int** 1 (–3)	**Cha** 1 (–3)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

E. Drinking Pool

This pool is filled with icy cold water. It is completely pure and refreshing, but has no special qualities.

F. Pool of Wine

A dark red liquid fills this pool. If a creature smells it without touching it, the odor is that of a fine elven wine. In actuality, this liquid is a strong, magic wine that can charm even the most willful of heroes. If a creature takes the smallest taste of the wine, that creature must make a saving throw

with a –4 penalty. If the creature fails this saving throw, it takes a full drink of the wine. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its magical potency but is still a fine wine.

Pool of Wine
Drink: The creature becomes intoxicated by the wine for a number of hours equal to 48 minus the creature's Constitution score. While intoxicated, the creature cannot use daily powers and takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls, all defenses, and skill checks. Only a Remove Affliction ritual can immediately end this intoxication.
Touch: The creature makes a saving throw. Failure results in the creature taking a full drink of the wine (see effects above).
Partial Submersion: As "touch," above.
Full Submersion: As "touch," above.

G. Dry Pool

This pool is completely dry. If a hero investigates the pool in earnest, a DC 17 Perception check allows him or her to determine that the bottom of the basin is a doorway to lower levels of this dungeon. A hero that discovers this can open this portal with ease.

This pool might serve as another entry into the Room of Pools. Some of the encounters described further in this article require such alternative entrances.

H. Hot Pool

This pool contains a hot liquid that is constantly boiling. If the liquid is tasted, it sears the tongue, but has no distinct taste. If touched, it burns a bit. The liquid here is magically super-heated, and it can be removed from the chamber and still retain its potency. If a large, breakable container is filled with this hot liquid, treat this container as level 6 *alchemist's fire* (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 24).

Hot Pool
Drink: The creature takes 1d6 fire damage.
Touch: The creature takes 1d4 fire damage.
Partial Submersion: The creature takes 1d10 fire damage.
Full Submersion: The creature takes 2d8 fire damage.

I. Aura Pool

This shimmering pool contains a liquid that appears to be water, but glistens and sparkles a bit more than normal water. Unlike other pools in this chamber, this one is only about half-full. If a creature tastes the water or touches it with a finger, that creature becomes a little light-headed for a moment. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its potency.

Aura Pool
Drink: The creature feels its whole body tingle and begins hallucinating, gaining a special "aura-voice" ability that lasts for 2d4 minutes. During this time, the affected creature can converse with the spirit auras of all living creatures within 30 feet (6 squares) of it when it drank from the aura pool. The affected creature can ask questions of these spirit auras during this time, and the spirit auras answer truthfully to the best of their ability. (An unwilling spirit aura is allowed a saving throw to avoid answering.) A creature can gain this "aura-voice" only once during its lifetime. This pool is different from the other pools in the chamber. It requires the DM to have a greater understanding of the backstory as well as the goals and intentions of the heroes. The questions asked by affected heroes might reveal specific information that only the DM knows and might impact the DM's story in significant ways. Only include the effects of this pool if you, as the DM, are ready to reveal some of the secrets of your story—and if your players are equally amenable, considering that their heroes may be personally involved. Given the right circumstances, this pool can make for a significant turning point in your story and provide the players with important information about your story and the other heroes.

J. Pool of Sleep

Despite its seemingly placid surface, this pool is filled with green hues that constantly swirl. Any creature that takes the slightest sip of this green liquid is overcome by a simple calm that it has never before experienced. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its potency.

Pool of Sleep
Drink: The creature makes a saving throw at a –2 penalty. Failure results in the creature falling asleep for 1d8 hours. An affected creature cannot be awoken earlier by any means except by using a Remove Affliction ritual or by submersion in the drinking pool (above).

K. Fish Pool

This pool is filled with clear water. Within the pool, several small fish swim. This pool is otherwise normal in all ways.

L. Ice Pool

This basin is bereft of liquid, instead holding several large chunks of dry ice that perpetually emit a column of cold, white fog. This column of fog covers the pool and extends to the ceiling of the chamber, providing concealment. Any creature that enters or starts its turn within the icy fog of this basin takes ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).

M. Treasure Pool

This basin appears to be filled with clear water. At the center of the pool, beneath the water's surface, a small pile of coins and gems is visible. If a creature breaks the surface of the pool, the treasure in the pool disappears into nothingness. When the creature removes its hand from the pool, the treasure reappears.

Although it might appear that the treasure in this pool is an illusion, it is real—just slightly affected by the glamour of the pool. However, the only way to reach the treasure is to drain the water from the pool. If the heroes empty the pool of its water, reward them with a small pile of gold coins and semiprecious gemstones. Alternatively, you might replace the treasure with an item necessary for a later task in your dungeon (such as a key, and so on).

If you wish, draining the pool also reveals the entrance to a larger treasure vault, as detailed in the short encounter below (*The Foulspawn's Secret Treasure*).

N. Pool of Muting

This pool is almost empty, with just a small amount of liquid remaining in the bottom. The liquid here appears to be water, with no odor or taste. In actuality, the liquid here is imbued with a strong enchantment. If the liquid is removed from the chamber, it loses its potency.

Pool of Muting

Drink: The creature loses the ability to speak and write for 2d8 hours. During this period, any player whose hero is so afflicted can communicate with other players only by using pantomime. This affliction can be cured immediately by the Remove Affliction ritual, or by submersion in the pool of healing (above).

Alternative Uses for the Liquids

The liquids contained in the pools are described above. However, you might wish to use the liquids in ways that expand the nature of the room and its contents. Some of these possible uses supersede the statements that the liquids lose their potency if removed from the room.

Below are some ideas for alternative uses for the liquids that you might use to improve the breadth of your heroes' capabilities or expand your overall story.

Ritual Component Uses

Some of the liquids in the room could augment rituals. Determining that a particular liquid can be used in such a way requires a hero to succeed on a DC 18 Arcana check. The following are some ideas for such uses, complete with descriptions of how the liquid being used enhances the ritual. You are of course encouraged to develop your own ideas and combinations. For example:

- If liquid from the treasure pool is used to augment the standard components used for Hallucinatory Item, the ritual's duration is increased to three days.
- If liquid from the pool of sickness is used to augment the standard components used for the Cure Disease ritual, the caster gains a +5 bonus to the Heal check used to determine if the ritual's target takes damage.
- If liquid from the fish pool is used to augment the standard components used for the Water Breathing ritual, the caster gains a +5 bonus to the Arcana check used to determine the ritual's duration.

Enchantment Uses

Some of the liquids in the chamber could enchant items plunged within them. Determining that a particular liquid can be used in such a way requires a hero to succeed on a DC 18 Arcana check. The following are some ideas for such uses.

- If a nonmagic heavy blade, light blade, or spear is placed into the pool of acid, that weapon must make a saving throw. If failed, that weapon is destroyed. If successful, the weapon becomes a level 4 or level 9 (DM's discretion) *acidic weapon* (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 62) for 1d4 days. This effect supersedes any enchantment previously on the weapon. After this time passes, the weapon reverts to its previous state. Only one weapon can be so affected at a time.
- If a creature fills a waterskin with water from the drinking pool, that waterskin becomes an "everfull waterskin." The effect is permanent and causes the waterskin to always be full of cool, refreshing water—unless the waterskin is intentionally left upended, in which case it empties of water and remains dry.
- If a creature drinking from the pool of sleep rolls a natural 20 on its saving throw to avoid falling asleep, that creature gains an immunity to sleep effects for the next 2d8 days. It can no longer be rendered unconscious by powers with the sleep keyword, though it still suffers all other effects, including damage, caused by such powers.

Mixing Liquids

Although the effects of the liquids are described in detail above, you might wish to allow—and even encourage—the heroes to mix liquids from different pools to create entirely new effects. Allow the heroes to make Insight or Arcana checks to determine that the liquids can be mixed to create such effects, but don't tell them what might happen if they do so. Let them experiment and have fun with it. The following are some ideas for such mixtures.

- Mixing the liquids from the pool of healing and the hot pool results in a healing steam rising into the air. This creates a close burst 1 zone centered on the square where the liquids were mixed. The zone lasts for 1 round. All creatures within the zone are treated as if they had been fully submerged in the pool of healing. If a creature has already gained the benefits of being fully submerged in the pool of healing since its last extended rest, it gains no benefit from this healing zone.
- If liquid from the fish pool is poured into the pool of green slime, the ooze in this basin begins writhing uncontrollably. The slimy beast in the basin splits into five separate globs, and these globs coalesce individually into four sahuagin raiders and one sahuagin priest (*Monster Manual*, page 224). These newly created sahuagin attack.
- Mixing samples from the pool of sickness and the pool of sleep results in the creation of a single dose of drow poison (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 51). Only one such dose can be created each day.

Story Hooks

You might wish to use the pools and their contents as a means for the heroes to accomplish certain goals that fall outside the Room of Pools. Here are some ideas for plot hooks you can give to the heroes prior to their arrival in the Room of Pools.

- Prior to arriving at the Room of Pools, the heroes learn of a great evil that is slumbering in a prison chamber deep beneath the ground somewhere nearby (such as a dragon or perhaps even a tarrasque). The heroes learn that this foul creature is powerful, but is kept asleep by powerful magic cast upon it long ago. However, the magical sleep effect that keeps this monster dormant is failing. The heroes must acquire liquid from the pool of sleep and pour it on the beast to ensure that it remains asleep for the foreseeable future.
- A later portion of the dungeon might be blocked by a permanent *wall of fire*. Only a hero who has drunk from the pool of drinking can safely walk through the flames. (They may have received clues as such, leading them to search for the right pool.)
- Some time before the heroes encounter the Room of Pools, they are hired by a local noble whose father has died recently. This noble is concerned about members of his court who are looking to kill him and usurp his newly gained title. This noble requires liquid from the aura pool to give to his personal diviner so that she can ferret out possible traitors in his court.
- Before encountering the Room of Pools, the heroes come upon a secret vault that contains considerable treasure. The entrance to the vault is guarded by an animated stone statue of an elf female who converses with any who approach her. She will not allow the heroes to enter the vault beyond (it is effectively sealed against them) unless they bring her what she calls "the wine of my true death." After some discussion, the heroes learn that "the wine of my true death" refers to an infusion of elven wine and acid. The heroes must mix the liquids from the pool of acid and pool of wine to create a concoction that the statue can drink to end her current unhappy existence. Doing this earns the heroes her gratitude and allows them to access the chamber beyond her.

Expanding on the Room of Pools

Again, although some players might revel in a looser, exploratory type of encounter, other players might grow restless without a clear goal to pursue (or enemy to defeat). You might therefore wish to expand the room in terms of monster encounters.

The room map provided here is a replication of the original map provided in *In Search of the Unknown*. As such, it has only one entrance. However, you are free to include other entrances to your Room of Pools. In fact, some of the following ideas require such additional entrances.

Random Encounters

In keeping with the "old school" feel of *In Search of the Unknown*, you might wish to incorporate random wandering monsters into the Room of Pools (it might be their only known source of fresh drinking water in the dungeon, after all). If you wish to do so, make sure to provide a few additional entrances to the room beyond the one provided on the map.

Roll 1d10 and refer to the table below to determine what monsters might wander into the Room of Pools and attack the heroes. The encounters described below are built around monsters of similar types to facilitate ease of play.

The following table is based on the party consisting of five player characters of 5th level. Adjust the monsters' levels as needed to accommodate higher or lower level heroes or smaller/larger parties. Also, keep in mind that the pools affect combat here. If a creature is pushed into or knocked prone in a pool (and the monsters are sure to attempt to push the heroes!), it might be affected by the liquid in that pool.

Roll	Enc. Level	Monsters
1	4	1 myconid sovereign (MM2, page 164) 2 myconid guards (MM2, page 164) 2 myconid rotslammers (Underdark, page 51)
2	4	3 cave fisher anglers (MM3, page 28) 2 cave fisher spikers (MM3, page 29) 5 cave fisher line spikers (MM3, page 29)
3	5	1 hive queen (MM2, page 13) 3 hive soldiers (MM2, page 12) 2 winged drones (MM2, page 12)
4	5	1 chitine web crafter (MM3, page 33) 3 chitine scouts (MM3, page 32) 1 volcanic dragon wyrmling (MM3, page 72)
5	6	3 duergar shock troopers (MM2, page 93) 1 duergar theurge (MM2, page 93) 2 duergar scouts (MM2, page 92)
6	6	1 quasit (MM3, page 46) 1 bloodseep demon (MM2, page 53) 4 gnaw demons (MM2, page 54)
7	7	1 servant of the fire lord (MM3, page 115) 2 fire temple champions (MM3, page 115) 10 fire temple elects (MM3, page 115)
8	7	2 young earthquake dragons (MM3, page 69)
9	7	1 chosen of Yeenoghu (MM3, page 105) 1 gnoll war fang (MM3, page 105) 4 deathpledged gnolls (MM2, page 126)
10	8	1 behir bolter whelp (MM2, page 22)

Quick Encounters in the Room of Pools

You can use the Room of Pools to create quick encounters built around the nature of the room. Take a look at one such encounter that has been fleshed out for your use.

The Foulspawn's Secret Treasure: A Skill Challenge/Combat Encounter

Once the heroes have removed the treasure from the treasure pool, have them make Perception checks (DC 12) to determine that the basin also serves as a door to another chamber beneath it. This door is warded by a mystical enchantment that prevents the basin door from being opened. The heroes must disable the ward before they can descend into the chamber below.

Setup

8 foulspawn wretches

A cadre of hideous foulspawn creatures constructed a treasure chamber beneath the treasure pool ages ago (the treasure seen in the pool might have been left behind in the creatures' haste and sloppiness). In their hubris, they thought no one would find the treasure chamber, but left several minions to watch over it nevertheless.

Once a hero has made one successful skill check to disable the door's ward, foulspawn wretches (*Monster Manual* 3, page 88) begin appearing in the room to attack the heroes as they attempt to open the door to the treasure chamber. When the heroes make the first successful check, two foulspawn wretches appear within 5 squares of the treasure pool and attack. They

are joined by two more wretches after each of the 3rd, 6th, and 9th skill check successes.

A hero hit by a foulspawn's attack is distracted, causing that hero to take a -2 penalty to the next skill check he or she makes to disable the warded basin door.

The Foulspawn's Secret Treasure

Level: 6 (XP 1,400 total: 800 for the skill challenge portion and 600 for the foulspawn wretches)

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Thievery.

Arcana (DC 12): The hero weakens the arcane magic protecting the door. This skill can be used to gain 4 successes in this challenge.

Athletics (DC 15): The hero forcibly removes one of the old, rune-etched stones from the rim of the basin, weakening the magic protecting the door. A success with this skill counts as two successes. This skill can be used to gain 4 successes in this challenge.

Thievery (DC 12): The hero uses mundane means to interrupt some portion of the magical ward, thus weakening it. This skill can be used to gain 3 successes in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Dungeoneering, Perception.

Dungeoneering (DC 12): The hero uses his or her knowledge of aberrant creatures and their methodologies to determine something about how the enchantment has been constructed. If he or she shares this information, the next hero to make an Arcana, Athletics, or Thievery check to disable the ward gains a +2 bonus to that check.

Perception (DC 10): The hero notices a fault in the stonework of the warded door. If he or she shares this information, the next hero to make an Arcana, Athletics, or Thievery check to disable the ward gains a +2 bonus to that check.

Success: The heroes open the basin-door and can descend into the treasure chamber below. Provide them with treasure appropriate to their level. At your choosing, this might also be the only entrance to a lower level of the dungeon.

Failure: The mystical ward locks down and cannot be opened by any means for one full day.

Foulspawn Wretch	**Level 7 Minion Skirmisher**
Small aberrant humanoid	XP 75
HP 1; **a missed attack never damages a minion.**	**Initiative** +10
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14	**Perception** +5
Speed 6, teleport 2	Low-light vision
Traits	
Ceaseless Murmurs	
Any enemy adjacent to two or more foulspawn wretches takes a -2 penalty to Will.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 7 damage, and a foulspawn wretch ally within 6 squares can teleport to a square adjacent to the target.	
Triggered Actions	
↯ **Screaming Echo** (teleportation)	
Trigger: The wretch drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The wretch teleports a nonminion ally within 6 squares of itself to the square the wretch occupies.	
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+8)	**Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 16 (+6)	**Cha** 17 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10	

About the Author

Craig Campbell was suckered into playing D&D in 1990 when some of his college friends told him he needed to get out less. In the time since, he's devoured many sourcebooks, transforming himself into a zombie-like creature that constantly seeks to tell amazing stories and eat the brains of his players. Hailing from northeastern Wisconsin (go Packers!), he currently lives in Marietta, Georgia with his all-consuming love of bad movies.